

JOHN L. SULLIVAN



R.F. DIBBLE

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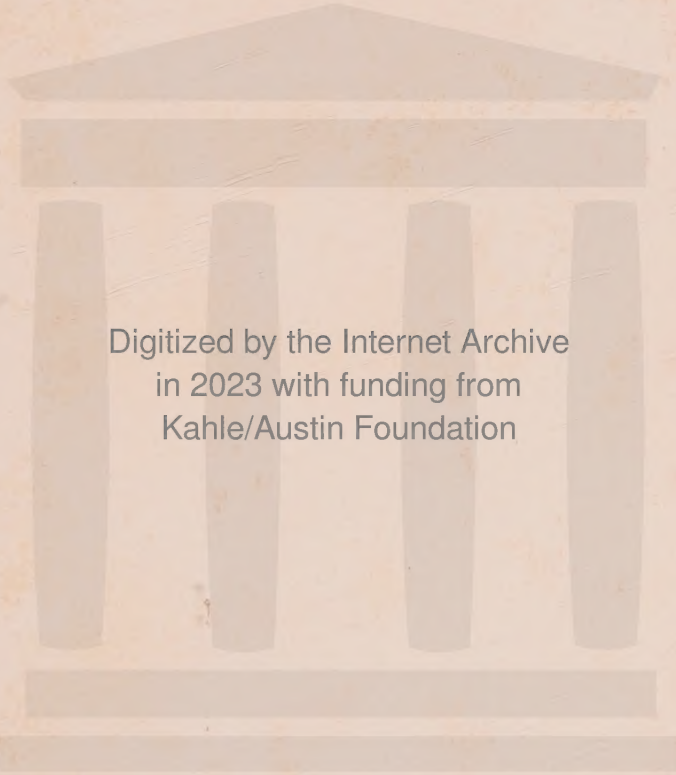
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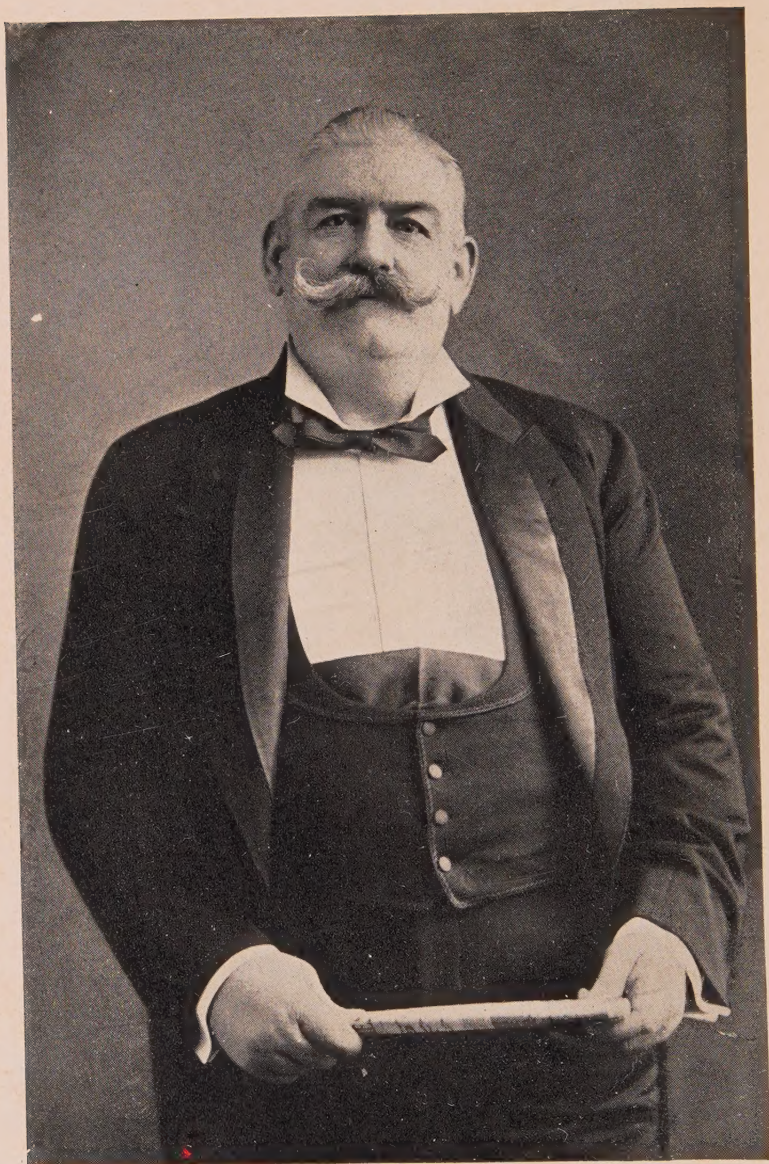
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JOHN L. SULLIVAN



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SULLIVAN THE ORATOR.

From a photograph in the Library of *The Boston Herald*.



JOHN L. SULLIVAN

AN INTIMATE NARRATIVE

BY

R. F. DIBBLE

With Illustrations



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BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1925



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TO
H. L. MENCKEN

PREFACE

CERTAIN pages from this book appeared in the July, 1924, issue of the *American Mercury*. Since most of its data has been compiled from a wide variety of newspapers, there may be a question as to the authenticity of some episodes. I have taken great pains, however, to exclude whatever seemed irrelevant, and nothing that seemed relevant, to the generally recognized facts of Sullivan's life.

For many reasons, I am especially indebted to Samuel Carrick of the Boston *American*, and George Almy of the Boston *Post*.

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INTRODUCTION

ONE evening in 1877, a Boston theatre was the scene of a decidedly uncommon episode. First, one Scannell, a pugilist of local fame, strode across the stage and glared contemptuously at his opponent — a massive, stocky, swarthy young Hercules, unknown to any one in the theatre. Then, suddenly, the contemptuous glare faded from Scannell's face, his jaw sagged in dismay, and he turned and fled abruptly to the nearest saloon, to drown the memory of his discomfiture in a most inglorious spree. Meanwhile the chagrined manager was delivering a stuttering apology to the audience, which naturally began to hiss. At once the unknown man arose, stalked to the footlights, scowled ferociously around at the onlookers, and bellowed in a throaty bass voice, "My name's John L. Sullivan, and I can lick any son of a —— alive! If any of 'em here doubts it, come on!" One of them, who was foolish enough to doubt it, did come on — over the footlights — but one colossal blow from Sullivan returned him to the audience.

Every one then fought and scrambled for the exits, in order to emulate the commendable example of Scannell. Thus John L. Sullivan, the "Strong Boy of Boston", came into his own. And thus Boston herself, the Hub of the Universe, the source of everything excellent in American manners and customs, the originator of all moral and literary endeavors — thus Boston, unwittingly but most appropriately, became the cradle of modern American pugilism. The dying New England tradition of supremacy in all fields of American activity was revived.

CHAPTER ONE: BOYHOOD

THE year 1892 marked a notable event in the publishing world. A Boston firm, grown weary of printing books that chanted the monotonous glories of the New England School, boldly departed from the stern and rockbound coasts of that tradition and ventured forth upon angry, uncharted seas by publishing a volume entitled "Life and Reminiscences of a Nineteenth Century Gladiator: By John L. Sullivan", dedicated to "the patrons and exponents of the science and art of boxing." Yet it was hoped that this autobiography might appeal to many worthy persons whose Puritan ideals had managed to survive the buffetings of this perplexingly modern world; accordingly, since Longfellow was still all the rage among safe and sane literary circles, the quotation "Why Don't You Speak for Yourself, John?" appropriately adorned the title page. It is to be feared, however, from the book's general correct-

ness of grammar and variety of diction, that some of John's intellectual associates must have given him considerable assistance; then, too, its moral tone is much more lofty than that which characterized John's private conversations among his tried and trusted friends.

"I am willing for once to drop my guard," so John or his mentor wrote in the opening pages, "ceasing to lead off, to feint, to fib, to duck or ward, allowing my head to be held in chancery between the covers of a book, and yet looking for lively cross-counter dealings." The autobiography, in fact, had a very heavy sale; but every page bears witness to the sad truth that its co-authors were unfortunately very deficient in those methods of scholarly research which, one feels, should have characterized a literary work produced so close to the classic elms of Harvard. Nevertheless, despite this lamentable deficiency, the book has at least some of the elementary virtues of research, and indeed it might well be introduced into university seminar courses as a means of testing the judicial capacities of candidates for the higher degrees in education. Even at its worst, it contains some facts concerning its author which would otherwise be unknown.

John Lawrence Sullivan was born in Boston on

October 15, 1858, in a house that stood close to Boston College. He always firmly believed, therefore, that his earthly *début* had been thrice blessed; and, though he frequently addled his brains over the matter, he could never quite determine whether he was most fortunate in his name, his native city, or his natal appearance in the environs of an educational institution. On the whole, however, he believed that the name of Sullivan was his chief distinction; he never ceased to laud the innumerable Bostonians, and in truth all Americans, who were so fortunate as to bear his own name. "There's enough of us Sullivans to repel an army, and we're always ready," he once boasted. "There's enough of us to fill any job you can name. Do you want brawn? Look at the Sullivan in Boston who's six feet, eight and one-half inches tall, working as a longshoreman for a dollar and a half a day. Do you want brain? Look at another Sullivan in Boston five feet, five inches short, working as president of a railway at a salary of \$25,000. There's Sullivans of all grades in between these two chaps. If we form a society called the United Sullivans, we can control everything in the land. We're certainly the balance of power. I'll make a side bet that, when the society is pulled off, the whole country'll set up and

take notice. As for the Sullivan women, they're the prettiest and wittiest, and they raise the biggest families too."

Both his parents were Irish. His paternal grandfather had been the champion shillalah fighter of Ireland, and his own father, Michael Sullivan, who early emigrated to America, staunchly sustained the family tradition by becoming the champion hodcarrier of Boston. Even after John had become champion of champions, Mike still entertained grave doubts concerning his son's ability.

"You think you're a strong man, don't you?" Mike would sneer. "Well, dad, I'm champion of the world," John would proudly reply. "Champion of the world!" Mike would snort. "There's men in old Ireland that could break you in two with one slap of their hand."

Mike measured only five feet, three inches and weighed only about one hundred and thirty pounds; but John's mother stood five feet, nine inches in her stockings and tipped the beam at one hundred and eighty pounds. Doctor Dudley A. Sargent, who once gave John an exhaustive physical examination, soon discovered that the champion owed his magnificent frame to his heritage from his mother; and the doctor closed his

lengthy discussion of John's fine points with this well-deserved tribute:

"All men, though the product of two beings, are born of women, but that a woman, usually considered the weaker vessel physically, should be so able to impress her progeny with the strong points of her own physique as to enable him to meet all comers in tests of strength, skill and endurance for a term of a dozen years is, to my mind, the most valuable lesson of this man's life. If the women of the land can learn from this man's physical development how potent the influence of the mother is in fashioning and transmitting not only the refined and delicate parts of her organism but also the brawn and sinew that conquers both opponents and environments and sustains the race, John L. Sullivan will have served to illustrate a very important fact." And John himself, who, like all good Americans, adored his mother, often rendered her a touching homage by remarking with a gulp, "All that I am in this world, I owe to my mother."

Little Johnny was like most other little Johnnies. He spun tops, cheated at marbles, and had many fracasés with other boys in which, so he once swore with unquestionable truth, he "always come out on top." But one may feel disposed to doubt

another statement of his: "I never had much trouble with my teachers in any of my schools." At all events, there are several fairly well-founded stories to the effect that Johnny had a great deal of trouble with the principal of the Dwight School, which he attended for some years. His mother, too, is authority for the fact that, even when he was only a baby, Johnny manifested signs which clearly indicated that he was an infant prodigy. "John could walk at ten months and could talk at fourteen," she boasted in the year before her death. "He was under a year old when he gave my sister as beautiful a black eye as you ever saw. She was kneeling down holding out her hands to him, when he let her have it with his right. He was as strong as a bear when he was a baby, and would struggle in my arms to get down before he was weaned, so that it was all I could do to hold on to him."

When his elementary school days were over, John entered Boston College, where he fortunately acquired the rudiments of those extraordinary elocutionary powers which served him so well in later days. Indeed, he was always fond of saying that he felt much prouder of his ability to make a telling after-dinner oration than of his ability to win fights. •For John always prided himself on his

scholastic attainments, and once retorted in this fashion to some unkind skeptics, "I want people to understand that, while not of an egotistical nature, I have a fair amount of common sense, and, with a Boston public school education, can give an intelligent opinion on almost any subject and conduct myself like a gentleman in any company." At the end of one battle, he paid high tribute to his Boston College instructors in this manner :

"Maybe some of you ginks thinks that I can't do nothing but fight, but let me put you wise that I'm admitted to be one of the prize products of the Boston College School of Oratory, and if you don't believe it, just listen to this sample. The fighting men Boston has turned out never give her no bad name, and she's been turning 'em out ever since the big Bunker Hill scrap. I believe in having a little fight in most everything except funerals. Anything that ain't got some fight in it is like a funeral, and I don't like funerals. Whether it's war, sport, business, or marbles, you've got to do more or less fighting or you're simply talking in your sleep. And if you're satisfied to talk in your sleep all your life, you might as well call in the undertaker now and save time."

The doting parents had early decided that Johnny should go into the priesthood ; but when

he was about sixteen and free from the restrictions of school, Johnny began to show signs which indicated that he had loftier ambitions in mind. For by this time he had attained such unusual proficiency in lifting heavy weights, in juggling full beer kegs before draining them, in tilting pianos and other heavy objects in a most reckless fashion, in tossing barrels of flour and kegs of nails over his head, in swearing and general carousing, that his parents began to entertain some doubts. One day a horse car jumped the track in Washington Street, and a crowd of six or eight men unsuccessfully tried to put it back. Then a thickset youth emerged from the bystanders, calmly grasped hold of the balky car, and — but let him tell what followed, in his own inimitable way. “I astonished the crowd by lifting the damn thing back all by myself.” It was thus gradually becoming evident that Johnny was not destined to adorn the cloth. As a matter of fact, he served as a plumber’s apprentice, then as plumber’s assistant. But just when his life work seemed to be definitely determined, he beat up a fellow laborer one day and was soon looking around for another job.

He turned first to the tinsmith’s trade and labored at it for over a year; then another “disagreement” arose between him and a brother



THE ADOLESCENT JOHN.

From a photograph in The Albert Davis Collection.



tinner who worked at the same bench. They argued about dogs, gamecocks, baseball, and in fact "anything and everything in sporting circles and a great many other things." Finally, when all verbal arguments were exhausted, the tinner offered to fight John to prove which one was wrong. "When I said, 'All right, come out into the yard,' he made a dive and skipped out before I knew what was up. If ever I wanted to lick any man in the world, he was that one; but he could sprint better than me, so I wasn't able to do it."

Baseball now claimed him for a time; he played principally at first base and in left field, "although I could play in any position equally well, and better than anybody else." But now, at a time when John was beginning to receive tempting offers from various baseball clubs — the Cincinnati Club is reported to have offered him a salary of \$1,300, which was very large for those days — the affair with Scannell came. After that, it was perfectly plain to everybody, including his parents, that John was far better fitted to be a pugilist than to be anything else — ball player, tinsmith, or plumber.

CHAPTER TWO: CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS — THE UPHILL CLIMB

I

THE providential bout with Scannell thus caused John to make the Great Decision, and from 1877 to 1882 he went through his probationary period. At the beginning he wisely developed a system of training that was doubtless chiefly responsible for his phenomenally successful career. In the first place, he always slept alone. "I don't believe in having a trainer sleep in the same bed with the person training," he said. "My reason is that a man can sleep better alone." For a number of years he adhered most rigorously to this rule; later, it was somewhat modified. In conditioning himself for a fight, he was accustomed to take "a dose of physic, which I prepare myself and which consists of about fifty cents' worth each of zinnia, salts, manna, and black stick licorice", all of which he carefully boiled together in clean

water. "In the night, before retiring, I take a goblet full of this medicine. It acts the next day, during which time I merely sit around doing nothing of any importance." When not in training, however, he "took things as easy as possible. . . . In fact, I give my whole system its leeway." The rest of his training methods differed little from the conventional routine of most pugilists.

John's earliest pugilistic endeavors were attended by the most favorable auspices. It so happened that William Muldoon, then an expert wrestler, was running a variety show, which included boxing exhibitions, in Boston during the winter of 1877-1878. One evening Muldoon's friend, Billy Madden, came to him and said, "There's a likely looking chap who's been hanging around the stage door night after night, trying to see you. Says he's getting only \$12 a week as a tinsmith, but is sure, if he gets the chance, that he can be champion of the world. He's probably just another of them braggers, but he does look good; why not give him the once over, William?" "All right, Billy," replied William. "Fetch him in." So John was invited to enter, and both Billy and William were so much impressed with his appearance that it was decided to give him a trial.

It chanced that Joe Goss, the once great English

champion, was in Boston at this time. Muldoon and Madden, both astute business men, realized that, if their protégé were to best Goss, he would at once leap into the limelight. A fight was therefore arranged between Goss and Sullivan, to be held at a Boston benefit for the Englishman. The first round was indecisive; but in the next round John "dealt him a blow which virtually ended the contest", and Goss had to be given an extra period¹ of time to recover. In the third round John was very gentle with the old warhorse, who was so utterly worn out that he was unable to continue, and the decision accordingly went to John. When Goss finally recovered the power of speech, he said something to the effect that "that 'ere bloke don't just 'it; 'e kicks like a mule."

Thus Sullivan had demonstrated that he was at least more than a match for a broken-winded, spavined ex-champion; and Muldoon, who knew that there were few really good pugilists at that time and who also wished to advertise his show, decided to gamble on John's apparent superiority over the mass of contemporary fighters. He therefore announced that any pugilist who could successfully oppose Sullivan for one round would be given twenty-five dollars, and that, for each

additional round, he would receive an extra twenty-five dollars. But John himself was not let into the secret at first; he believed that he was to box gently with his opponents. Early in 1878 he faced Steve Taylor, an eminently successful mediocre pugilist, in a New York theatre. Taylor, who ardently desired to win at least twenty-five dollars, went after his amazed opponent hammer and tongs. When round one was over, John was in a towering rage at this unexpected treatment, and asked to be allowed to "go in and lick Taylor quick." Muldoon told him to go ahead. At the beginning of round two, John came bursting out, catapulted himself across the ring, and struck Taylor so hard that both smashed into the ropes and fell down in a twisted mass of arms and legs. Then, yanking Taylor to his feet, John gave him several lightning buffets that knocked him completely out. This affair made three men perfectly happy: Taylor, bruised and bleeding though he was, was richer by twenty-five dollars; Muldoon, at a cost of only twenty-five dollars, had cleverly staged an act that made his show an overwhelming success; and for the first time John had tasted the sweets of swift and summary revenge.

He had done more — he had made a name for himself. He had no trouble now in finding oppo-

nents, and so he proceeded to win further laurels. In the spring of 1878 he left Muldoon's show, and during the following summer he fought a number of entirely successful frays. But he was not yet widely known, and the sad fact must therefore be recorded that the sport-writing Homers of those epic days left the fame of his early encounters unsung. Within a few months, however, he had attained such heroic proportions that lyres began to twang and bards to chant his mighty prowess. More than that, they were commonly so tonguetied with amazement before this phenomenal hero that they became mere dumb recorders of the golden language that fell from his lips as he ripped and slashed at his foes. Posterity's debt to these modest writers is very great; for, even as the encounters of Ulysses, Aeneas, Roland, and innumerable other mighty men of old are most vivid when their biographers step aside and allow the actors to recount their own deeds in their own way, so Sullivan looms largest when his biographers efface themselves and permit him to speak as only he could speak.

Toward the end of 1878, he fought with Cockey Woods, "a big man", but he "soon disposed of him." Early in 1879 he "sparring" with Dan Dwyer, heralded as the "Champion of Massa-

chusetts.” John laconically summarized this fray in these words, “I had the best of the encounter.” Shortly afterward, he fought with Professor Mike Donovan at a benefit performance. “I wound up with him in three rounds and endeavored to knock him out, when the master of ceremonies made us shake hands,” chanted John. The Professor was so much impressed that, on his return to New York, he told all the “knowing ones that there was a fellow up in Boston by the name of Sullivan who was going to be the boss of them all.”

John first fought for a stipulated purse with John Donaldson in Cincinnati, in December, 1880. For ten rounds Donaldson “hugged the floor the greater part of the time”, so John maintained; but in the tenth round he finally “knocked him out of time.” In fact, the sporting world was now beginning to realize that, if given the least opportunity, Sullivan could hit hard enough to knock a horse down — “which,” one of his friends confessed, “was something that, up to now, only a few of his closest acquaintances had found out to their complete satisfaction.” But the fight with Donaldson had unfortunately taken place on Christmas Eve; and next day some Cincinnati Christians celebrated the season of good will by

causing the arrest of both combatants. When the case came to trial, witnesses were called to testify. One of them, asked whether he had seen a prize fight, chuckled, "No, I seen a foot race. Donaldson was ahead and Sullivan was running after him, but couldn't ketch him." Both the principals were acquitted, and the judge, accompanied by the various witnesses and the attorneys for the defense and prosecution, adjourned *sine die* to a neighboring saloon.

Shortly before his fight with Donaldson, Sullivan had printed this challenge:

Cincinnati,

Dec. 9, 1880.

I am prepared to make a match to fight any man breathing, for any sum from \$1,000 to \$10,000 at catch weights. This challenge is especially directed to Paddy Ryan [the reigning champion] and will remain open for a month if he should see fit to accept it.

Respectfully yours,
John L. Sullivan.

When Paddy saw this "defi", he refused to accept on the ground that the challenger was not yet worthy of notice. "Go and get a reputation," snarled Paddy; and, to his eventual sorrow, John obeyed him.

He began by posting his famous offer — first

made in March, 1881 — which stated that he was prepared to give fifty dollars to any pugilist in the world who could survive four rounds with him, the fight to be governed by the Marquis of Queensbury Rules. For at this time almost all fistic battles were fought under the London Prize-Ring Rules, which were so lenient as to be almost ludicrous. The ring was pitched on turf; the combatants fought with bare fists; a round ended automatically when either fighter went to the earth, without regard to the length of time. These rules also allowed, and even fostered, such gentle methods as gouging, any sort of wrestling, the use of iron nails in shoes, snuff in the mouth to be puffed into the opponent's eyes, and clawing and scratching with the finger nails. Their general latitude is indicated by Rule Five: "On the men being stripped, it shall be the duty of the seconds to examine their drawers, and if any objection arises as to the insertion of improper substances therein, they shall appeal to their umpires." But the Marquis of Queensbury Rules permitted no such diversions. They stipulated that each round was to last three minutes, that five-ounce boxing gloves must be worn, that the fights must take place within a board-floor ring, and that there must be police supervision.

In May, 1881, Sullivan started to fulfill his contract by battling with John Flood, the "Bull's Head Terror", in a barge on the Hudson River, close to Yonkers. This peculiar place was chosen in order to escape police interference — for, sad to relate, John's curious sense of honor sometimes persuaded him to allow violations of the Marquis of Queensbury Rules. Only a few friends attended John, but Flood had many companions who had plotted a clever scheme: if their hero should seem likely to be worsted, they were all to join together and pitch Sullivan and his associates into the river. Unfortunately, they never had a chance to put this plan into effect, as John's account of the fray makes clear: "I knocked my man out before they had realized what had happened, and there was no need for them to carry out their job." When the unconscious Flood had partially recovered from his involuntary stupor, John walked over to the poor fellow's corner, shook his hand, and magnanimously said, "We met as friends, and we part as friends." As soon as Flood was able to speak, he strongly insisted that he had lost the fight because he had eaten too much supper on the preceding night; but, somehow or other, no one seemed to believe him — not even his backers. The crest-fallen "Bull's Head Terror" was somewhat molli-

fied, however, when the spectators presented him a purse of ninety-eight dollars, of which ten dollars was given by John.

The next victim who went to his doom was a blacksmith who weighed over three hundred pounds and measured seven feet in height. His gigantic proportions necessitated a new form of assault — or, as John remarked, he “had to figure on a way to get at him.” Inspiration came to John at the beginning of the first round; he merely poked his left hand into the pit of the blacksmith’s stomach. The fellow at once doubled up willy-nilly — an action that brought his jaw within John’s reach, and with catlike swiftness he struck the down-pointing jaw so hard that its owner tumbled over. This action was repeated several times, until finally the rapidly weakening monster lumbered blindly at Sullivan, who merely stuck both his fists straight out, and the human sacrifice “ran into them and knocked himself out.” John then called the fallen man’s frightened son from the shrieking audience and said, “Here, bub, take this fifty dollars and run with it to your Ma. Your Daddy tried hard to earn it.” Paddy Ryan, “the Troy Terror”, who had by this time gained enough respect for Sullivan to be anxious to see him in action, was a witness of this slaughter; and

at the finish he graciously commented, "Sullivan is a clever young fellow."

The clever young fellow had now become so much in demand that a Philadelphia theatre engaged him, at a salary of \$150 per week, to begin a series of bouts with all aspirants who wanted to earn fifty dollars. Many came, but all were conquered in a most businesslike fashion. One of these challengers was especially cocksure; but John, as he himself admitted, "put him in the land of dreams in thirty seconds", and for some time there were grave doubts as to whether he could be revived.

From Philadelphia Sullivan went to Chicago, where his most worthy opponent was a burly tugman. A contemporary account of the struggle reads thus: "Sullivan smashed him viciously a few times, and considerably disfigured the ambitious tugman's countenance;" and in the fourth round John "knocked him so stiff that when the allotted ten seconds had passed, he was unable to put in an appearance." This sad debacle forfeited his claim to the stipulated prize money, of course; but John, whose generosity was equalled only by his canniness in the matter of self-advertisement, gave his conquered rival twenty-five dollars.

At Mount Clemens in Michigan, a bully, entirely

unaware that he was picking on Sullivan, tried to elbow him off the sidewalk. John politely requested the fellow to explain "what he meant by doing that." "I'll show you, you lousy ——!" growled the town terror; and John was therefore, as he later remarked, "under the necessity of putting him to sleep in less than two minutes." The delighted citizens ardently desired to give him \$250 as a slight reward for his chivalrous deed — some of them even advocated the renaming of a street in his honor — but he refused to accept the gift. He wound up his Michigan tour by greeting a certain "Michigan Giant" with one punch in the stomach, one on the point of the jaw, and by means of these two blows "landed him in the second row of orchestra seats."

During these months, Professor Mike Donovan had continued to dog Sullivan, and had cheerfully prophesied that a dreadful fate awaited him should they ever meet in a ring for a second encounter. Early in 1882, Donovan repeated his boast to a huge audience in Madison Square Garden, New York. Unfortunately, he was entirely unaware that Sullivan had completed his tour and was a much interested spectator. No sooner had the Professor concluded his boastful remarks than John stepped forth upon the stage and stated, in a

flood of vituperative Elizabethan English, excessively vigorous even for him, that he was ready to accept the challenge on the spot. Donovan, taken utterly aback, stuttered out, "I ain't got no show against this man," and immediately vanished with astonishing speed. "Speech! Speech!" the crowd then shrieked at Sullivan, and he responded nobly as was his wont. "I've had some pretty hot fights lately, but when I hit 'em once or twice they usually weaken at once. The longest scrap I ever had went about twenty minutes, and that fellow was on the floor most of the time. I was never learned to box; I learned myself from watching other boxers. My style of boxing is perfectly oracular — no, I mean original — with me. A fighter can't be made out of a stiff. A man that can stick four hours and be half pounded to death has to be born."

II

Everybody, even Paddy Ryan, was now convinced that Sullivan had "got a reputation", and his great opportunity was close at hand. Articles were drawn up which stated that, on February 7, 1882, John L. Sullivan was to fight the American champion at New Orleans, for a purse of \$5,000

and a side bet of \$1,000. John was so suspicious of the moral principles of Paddy and his friends that, for several days before the combat, he cooked his own food in order to avoid the possibility of being poisoned.

On the eve of the great day, it was discovered that the Louisiana authorities would not allow the battle to be fought within the precincts of that State. After a hurried consultation, it was decided that the fight should take place on schedule at Mississippi City. At 5.05 A.M. on February 7, a train drawing twelve coaches packed with over one thousand persons departed from New Orleans to the chosen spot. "No more orderly crowd ever started for a Sunday School picnic," wrote one correspondent. "A conference of clergymen couldn't have been more staid." When the journey ended, the onlookers, while waiting for the fray to commence, amused themselves by laughing and jeering at the proclamation which Governor Lowrey of Mississippi had ordered to be posted at the ring — a pronouncement to the effect that all good citizens should, if necessary, use shotguns to prevent the fight. Fortunately, however, no good citizens were there, as the absence of firearms and the universal prevalence of betting proved.

To the inexpressible delight of the audience, the epoch-making event was conducted under the London Prize-Ring Rules; that is to say, the ring was on the ground, the rivals fought with bare knuckles, and the contest soon developed into a combined hitting, wrestling, biting, gouging, and scratching match. When time was called, Sullivan at once made a lionlike spring at "the Trojan Giant" which completely demoralized him; and in less than thirty seconds John had scored the first knockdown. Ryan now realized that his only chance of winning lay not in fighting but in wrestling; therefore in the second round "they wrestled for a fall, Ryan winning and falling heavily on his opponent." But by the third round Ryan had become so weak and scared that John "just pushed him over; he didn't want to kill him." After the fifth round, in fact, Sullivan's seconds cautioned him not to go after Ryan so viciously, inasmuch as he "had him done and might kill him." But in the next round Ryan temporarily recovered; he "closed and, getting Sullivan across the buttock, downed him." This was the champion's last gasp, however, for in round nine he was knocked senseless by a "right-hander under the left ear", and "was so disabled that the best care of physicians was required" to bring him to, while Sullivan

laughingly jumped over the ropes and "ran a hundred-yard dash to his quarters." A crazy mob of souvenir hunters at once jumped into the ring, smashed to bits the chair in which Sullivan had rested between rounds, and carried the fragments away in triumph.

Various alibis were claimed by Ryan and his friends. The defeated champion burst into print with a series of statements which insisted that his rupture and his truss had so crippled him that he was unable to fight with his customary ferocity; but when requested to give ocular proof of his statements, he made a lame excuse and promptly disappeared. One fervent worshipper of Ryan offered a brilliant explanation for the cause of his defeat. Sullivan, he said, was a Bostonian and therefore a gentleman of undoubted culture; in the ninth round he had begun to entertain Paddy with an exposition of Professor Tyndall's latest contribution concerning the atomic theory — and then, in a flash, struck him under the left ear. But Ryan himself was privately very frank. "When Sullivan struck me," he mourned, "I thought that a telegraph pole had been shoved against me endways." Paddy's mental and physical pangs, however, were somewhat alleviated on the evening following the fight. On returning to

New Orleans that evening, both he and Sullivan put up in the same hotel. "Being in my rooms with a party of friends," John narrates, "I sent for him and he partook of our festivities."

Countless bards, roused to new heights of poetic fervor after this great, history-making affair, at once broke loose all over the land. An inglorious but by no means mute poet thus described the thrilling sequence of events :

When the fight was opened, Ryan, 'mid applause,
 Acted like a Trojan, which indeed he was ;
 Soon the Boston laddie, with his fists and hooks,
 Caused a deep commotion 'mid the pocketbooks.
 Sports grew pale with anguish when they saw their
 means
 Filling up the wallets from the land of beans.

A Bostonian rhymer thus gave some pointed hints to the greatest living practitioners of the New England poetic tradition :

Thy bards, henceforth, O Boston !
 Of this triumph of triumphs will sing,
 For a muscular stroke has added a spoke
 To the Hub, which will strengthen the ring !
 Now Lowell will speak of the "ruby",
 And Aldrich of "closing a match",
 And Longfellow'll rhyme of "coming to time",
 Of "bunches of fives" and "the scratch !"



“THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS.”

“Meeting of the ‘Police Gazette’ Champion, Paddy Ryan, and John L. Sullivan of Boston, in the great contest for the heavy-weight championship of the world, and five thousand dollars stakes, near New Orleans, La.”

National Police Gazette, February 18, 1882.

The whole East, in fact, went crazy with enthusiasm. In New York the unbelievable news of Sullivan's victory was received at a famous bar-room, which was run by and conducted for pugilists, streetwalkers, and thieves. Before the battle, everybody present had been lauding Ryan and roundly damning the young upstart who actually seemed to believe that he could defeat the great Paddy. But when Sullivan's victory could no longer be doubted, there was a chorus of delighted "I told you so's", and everybody drank to the health and long reign of the victor.

And the victor, on his journey homeward, was greeted with all the acclaim that commonly attends a Presidential tour. Immense crowds thronged every stopping place, while shouts of "Our great pugilist!" rent the air. When he finally reached Boston early in March, what followed was best described by one of her most eminent citizens — who for reasons of policy shall be nameless — in the terse comment, "Hell broke loose." The streets were jammed, traffic was absolutely blocked, flags and streamers almost blotted out the sun, and every store, hotel, saloon, and dive did an unparalleled business. All urban enterprises, save the churches alone, were enormously benefited. The crowning feature was a

reception at the Dudley Street Opera House. There Sullivan was presented with "an elegant gold watch and chain", and also with "a splendid horseshoe of wax flowers, eighteen inches in height, and set in a gilt frame." Only one thing occurred to dim the joy of Sullivan's reception — a rumor ran about with wildfire rapidity that he had first learned to fight by whipping his father. John spent one decidedly uncomfortable evening at home, endeavoring to persuade Mike Sullivan that he himself was in no way responsible for this libelous tale.

Sportsmen vied with each other in friendly contests to see who could invent the most appropriate name for him. He was variously called "The Strong Boy", "The Boston Hercules", "Knight of the Fives", "King of the Ring", "Prince of Pugilists", "Spartacus Sullivan", "Trip-Hammer Jack", "Hurricane Hitter", "His Fistic Highness", "The Cultured Slugger", and finally, when all other epithets were exhausted, "Sullivan the Great." And still everybody felt that these names were entirely inadequate: what *could* be great enough for John? George Washington might be the greatest American, Daniel Webster might be New England's greatest orator, and Longfellow her most notable poet; Emerson

might be Massachusetts' most penetrating philosopher, Lowell might be Boston's most versatile littérateur, and the reigning mayor her most consummate ass — who cared? High above them all towered John — “*Our John*” — begotten, born, nourished, reared, educated, and trained in Boston — her pet, her darling, her pride — her newest and greatest celebrity — *her* champion!

CHAPTER THREE : CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS — ON THE HEIGHTS

I

THAT new champion proved to be a real champion. His testing period was over, and during the next ten years he was to win immortal renown as the gladiator *par excellence* of the nineteenth century — the great, hulking hero whose fabulous achievements elevated pugilism into the realm of epic poetry. By 1882 his method of fighting was characterized by the artless perfection that always accompanies great art. For his technique was simplicity itself: he merely kept hammering with ruthless, atavistic ferocity at his opponents until the opponents became insensible. An ardent admirer once epitomized Sullivan's preëminent skill in this epigram: "Other boxers begin by sparing; he begins by fighting — and he never ceases to fight."

It never seemed to occur to him that he could be beaten; indeed, he often had his rival whipped before

a blow had been struck. The rival, looking fearfully across the ring, would see a burly, menacing figure just under six feet in height and weighing close to one hundred and ninety pounds. The iron muscles bulged and swelled beneath the tawny skin; black, coarse hair bristled all over the huge head; the deep, thick, hairy chest and the sloping shoulders betokened a man of extraordinary strength; the broad face, the square, pile-driver jaw, and the ominous droop at the corners of the mouth, were all blended into a terrifying grin; the stony gray eyes plainly showed that he wondered why anybody in the world was foolish enough to climb into a ring with him. Then time would be called, and the lithe body leaped into flaming action. He "fought like a man with a personal grievance", and utterly disdained to defend himself. There was no fancy footwork, no dancing, no side-stepping; there was only a wicked rush, a stupendous swing or two — and all was over.

From 1882 until 1892 Sullivan completely dominated the American prize ring. He was ready to fight any one — save only the redoubtable negro, Peter Jackson — anywhere, at any time, for little money or even none. For in those sentimental days, men still fought because they liked to fight; the commercialism of sport in America had barely

begun. There were, of course, plenty of blusterers who were excessively bold — on paper. Scarcely had John become the champion of America when scores of amusingly egotistical challenges were hurled at him. He quickly discovered that it was absolutely impossible to pin these braggarts down to definite engagements, and was therefore obliged to repay them in their own coin, in order to keep his escutcheon spotless.

On March 23, 1882, this notice appeared on sporting pages all through the land :

There has been so much newspaper talk from parties who state that they are desirous of meeting me in the ring that I am disgusted. Nevertheless, I am willing to fight any man in this country, for five thousand dollars a side; or, any man in the old country for the same amount at two months from signing articles, — I to use gloves, and he, if he pleases, to fight with the bare knuckles. I will not fight again with the bare knuckles, as I do not wish to put myself in a position amenable to the law. My money is always ready, so I want these fellows to put up or shut up.

John L. Sullivan.

After this, Sullivan was less bothered by paper-weight fighters, and was therefore able to resume what he loved to call his "series of picnics" — a guarantee that he would whip any one within

four rounds or forfeit fifty dollars. Before John pounced upon his opponent in these conflicts, his manager invariably admonished him to "finish his man, but to be careful and not knock him out forever." Pat Sheedy, one of Sullivan's first managers, once did something that aroused his pupil's ire, and the pupil at once offered to beat up his teacher. Trembling with fear, Pat stuck a Derringer against John's ribs and begged for mercy. The only person who ever really managed Sullivan, in fact, was one who was strong enough to down his pupil — not by fighting, but by wrestling.

The "series of picnics" proved to be immensely popular. At every city masses of people surged in to see "The Ideal Thumper" thump his unfortunate opponent. When the national hero stepped grandly forth upon the platform, pandemonium would break loose; but occasionally individual comments became audible above the deafening roar. "Well, if he ain't just like his picture!" "Ain't he the darling?" "Oh, he's a daisy and in full bloom too!" "Look at the neck on him!" When the battle began, the mob would invariably shout for blood. Once, when John was fighting rather mildly with an antediluvian American champion, cries of "Go in and mop him up!" arose. Sullivan stood stock still, then stepped to the front of

Barry College Library

Miami, Florida

the platform, raised his hand and said, "Gentlemen, this affair to-night is just a friendly set-to. Some day I may oblige you by killing a man."

At times, before the combat had started, some spectators would shout sarcastic remarks at John, to the effect that the particular opponent of the evening would prove to be his Waterloo; but Sullivan had a set speech for such a contingency: "The bigger they are, the harder they'll fall." A favorite taunt directed against him was, "Pull off your gloves and fight like a man; the feller you're fightin' ain't wearin' no gloves." John would quietly reply, "If I don't use gloves, I'll kill him." One night, as soon as Sullivan came forth, it was painfully obvious that he had boils all over the back of his neck; and various voices charitably suggested that his opponent would be certain to direct his attack at the boils. "If he hits 'em, I'll only beat him all the quicker," John retorted; and, to the frenzied delight of the spectators, both prophecies were speedily fulfilled.

When the bell sounded time, Sullivan would sometimes stick out his head, so that his foe might imagine he had a chance to hit him; but the foe rarely dared to take such a hazardous risk, for fear that the champion was merely toying with him. Occasionally, after John had knocked his opponent

out in a particularly effective fashion, the sympathy of the audience for the under dog would manifest itself in rumbling threats: "He ought to be lynched!" "Kill the big brute!" Then John would pull off his gloves, pick up his senseless rival and help to revive him; and the crowd would promptly forget its anger and cheer the victor to the roof. Thus encouraged, John would advance and make a prepared speech — though at times he would luckily forget the oration that his friends had composed for him and would improvise a much better one. When the crowd had departed it often happened, strange to say, that Sullivan and the man whom he had just pummeled would meet in the same saloon; and the vanquished man would say something like this: "John, you're a great chap. I've licked everybody in these parts; you're the first guy that ever even knocked me down." "Have a drink!" John would growl in a tone that was intended to be friendly.

These picnics almost invariably had the same end. In a short time, Sullivan was forced to raise the offer of fifty dollars as high as a thousand in order to tempt any one to face him — for his very name now turned iron jaws to glass. His art had become so deadly, indeed, that sporting papers were forced to resort to the stock phrase: "After

the first few minutes, it was simply a question of mercy on Sullivan's part." Before long, the few challengers who had not yet been disposed of became excessively wary, and even resorted to trickery in order to have some slight chance of winning. One particularly crafty fellow rubbed himself with oil, and wrapped four yards of blue flannel around his stomach; but in almost less than no time John struck him so hard that he was unconscious for fifteen minutes. When he came to, he apparently feared that he was still in dire peril, for he leaped up and ran so blindly toward the street door that he missed it, struck his head against the brick wall by the doorpost, and thus knocked himself cold for another fifteen minutes.

One night, furious because his challenger had managed to last for three rounds by resorting to all manner of improper wiles, Sullivan knocked him through the ropes. He landed in the orchestra, where he managed to smash two chairs and three violins before he rolled senseless on the floor; and John, fearing that the wretched fellow was dead, slipped off the stage and hid himself in the wings.

On July 17, 1882, Tug Wilson, an English pugilist who swore that he had "come over to pulverise that American puppy", actually managed to last through the stipulated four rounds by hugging

Sullivan and crawling around on the floor — for Tug had insisted that this particular contest should be waged under the London Prize-Ring Rules. Nevertheless, in spite of his cleverness, Tug himself was well pulverized; but one of his friends poured balm on his wounds by admonishing him to remember “what a heap of court plaster he could buy with that \$1,000 he’d won.” Tug, however, did something even wiser, for after he had healed his wounds by expending not more than ten dollars for court plaster, he was still rich enough to return to England and open a public house, which eventually brought him in a very considerable fortune. A sporting journal, in its account of this farcical contest, solemnly referred to the “splendid hitting powers of one of the contestants, and the patience and Christian fortitude of the other.” It was no wonder that, after this disheartening experience, Sullivan was moved to make this protest, “I don’t like the London Prize-Ring Rules, as they allow too much monkey business.”

Three weeks later, on August 6, John engaged in a fray that was unusually interesting because he did not commence in his customary businesslike fashion. His opponent was Herbert Slade, a New Zealander, known as “The Maori”, who was the special protégé of Richard K. Fox, publisher of that

popular pink illustrated weekly — the *Police Gazette*. Fox had once championed Sullivan, and had even given him a thousand-dollar prize belt; but soon after they had quarreled, and Fox's affectionate regard turned to such bitter hatred that he almost completely neglected his arduous editorial duties in order to discover a fighter who would be able to wrest the belt away from John. The prices for admission to this encounter, which was held in Madison Square Garden, were graded thus: "One dollar on the Twenty-Sixth Street side of the house, and two dollars on the opposite side, the Madison Avenue gallery and the main floor, with twenty-five dollars each for boxes, all of which were quickly sold." Ticket speculators, a type of public vermin apparently common to all ages, secured most of the billets, and the prices of many seats were therefore doubled and even trebled.

Sullivan had trained himself down to "a shade below two hundred pounds, and although still carrying too much beef, was in good condition; his eye was bright and sparkling and his countenance was the picture of confidence." Slade, on the contrary, was so nervous that he dared not look across the ring at the champion. "The expression on his countenance was certainly not calculated to inspire his friends with confidence." Before time

was called, both were sternly admonished "that there was to be no wrestling."

John opened the festivities with "an easy left-hander which failed to reach home, although he laid the right glove somewhat gently on the left ear." After this unprecedented opening, however, Sullivan began to get down to business; he "landed his left fairly on the nasal organ hard enough to distill the ruby and slightly confuse the recipient." Then, breaking loose in his orthodox manner, he knocked Slade through the ropes; and while Fox's prize discovery crawled painfully back into the ring, the crowd saluted his reappearance with shouts of, "He's a dunghill! He's a dog!" When time was called, Slade was almost out and staggered wearily to his corner. For some reason, Sullivan opened the second round in the same easy-going fashion; and Joe Goss, his chief assistant, was moved beyond himself at John's curious behavior to shout at him, "What's the matter, John? 'It 'im in the belly, John; 'it 'im in the belly!" Sullivan's second assistant assured Joe that "Sully had his man safe"; but Joe dolefully replied, "Aye, but I want 'im a bit safer."

When the third round started, John had apparently concluded that he had dillydallied long enough. Straight as an arrow he dashed at Slade,

who "started on a dead run across the stage. Sullivan, a look of contempt on his face, pursued him, sending in his right repeatedly, the last blow catching the frightened New Zealander on the back of the head and neck and sending him sprawling on the floor, face downward, where he remained, the picture of bewilderment, until led in a dazed condition to his corner." When he was told that he had lost because he had reposed on the floor for over ten seconds, he protested most vigorously. It was not his fault if he had lost, he said; he had merely forgotten to get up on time. The referee, after advising Slade to carry an alarm clock with him on his next encounter, declared Sullivan the winner.

The cutest boxer who ever faced Sullivan was doubtless Charlie Mitchell, the slippery Englishman who first fought the champion in Madison Square Garden on May 14, 1883. In the first round an unbelievable event occurred — John was knocked down — a catastrophe that had never happened before. Perhaps it will be best to let John himself explain how this calamity occurred: "My legs got crossed somehow, and just at this time Mitchell hit me, knocking me down as you would push over a chair. Then I got up and went for him like a bull at a rag." In the third round,

in fact, John knocked Mitchell completely across the ring, where he tottered about, clinging feebly to the ropes. At this point the police interfered, even though Sullivan begged the police captain — a good friend of his — to let the bout go on. “Captain,” he implored, “let me have just one more crack at him.” “John, do you want to kill him?” the officer mildly answered.

No seats were provided for the audience at this historic affair; the whole crowd stood. Among the most notable spectators present was Roscoe Conkling. When the long black coat and the silk top hat announced his arrival, a seat was hastily built for him by laying a plank across two beer kegs; and from this place of honor he surveyed the proceedings with all his accustomed senatorial dignity. It was, indeed, a motley gathering: bankers, pickpockets, lawyers, thieves, brokers, merchants, Bowery pimps, coachmen, dudes, men about town, actors, baseball players, and millionaires — every one from Fifth Avenue to the underworld elbowed and shoved to get near the ring. Each person distrusted his neighbor; each person kept his eyes on the fighters and his hand on his purse. On account of this watchfulness, no untoward event occurred except John’s awful downfall; and the whole gathering buzzed

with excitement as numerous explanations were advanced. There were rumors, even at that early date, that the champion was drinking too much — for what other possible reason could he have been floored? But after the fight, when quizzed by reporters as to the truth of these insinuations, John angrily replied, "I ain't touched a drop to-day, and that report's all damned nonsense." He then proceeded to Bentley's saloon, to pass the rest of the evening as a champion should.

But when on June 30, 1884, he met Mitchell again, there was no possible doubt as to his condition. Instead of wearing his usual costume — a pair of green trunks, encircled by an American flag — he was in full evening dress. Diamond rings flashed on his fingers, and diamond studs as big as nutmegs blazed on his shirt. Yet, as he came reeling across the ring, no one could fail to see how disreputably disheveled he was: his face was swollen, blotched, and unshaven, his half-closed eyes were bloodshot, his hair was tousled. Hundreds of voices chimed together, "Sullivan's full as a goat!" As he swayed, lurched, and leered above the ropes, his trainer announced: "Gentlemen, Mr. Sullivan's doctor won't let him spar. He ain't well and can't fight." The champion's thick, husky voice hiccupped: "Gen'l'men, thish

the firs' time I ever come to New York to fight and wan't able to do it. But I been sick, an' I ain't in no condition to fight. Some may think I'm drunk, but I'm just dead sick. The doctor's certificate says so." Then Mitchell announced that he, too, had "been a 'avin' a bad time of it with malaria, and maybe it would be just as well not to fight." A man, primed for the act, rose and sheepishly threw a bouquet at Sullivan's feet; he awkwardly picked it up and staggered away as fast as he could. Several unimportant bouts followed — for the admission money was not returned. The commercialism of sport and the downfall of Sullivan had simultaneously begun.

Sickness of this particular variety became increasingly common to John. The time was rapidly approaching, in fact, when he would no longer be able to prove the truth of the two boasts he was so fond of making: that he could whip any man born of woman, and could consume any amount of liquor, in any combination, and still walk straight. In his drunken moments he was philosophical, sentimental, generous, or vicious. When philosophical, he preferred long words; he would use all that he knew, and then look up others in a dictionary. A friend once tested him with "discriminate." He glowered reproachfully and countered

with the remark, "I've got a pretty good nut on me" — but the word remained undefined.

When he was sentimental, he would roar out, "Oh, White, White Moon" and "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" till the surrounding walls trembled. Once, when he was shown the skeleton of a crucifixion fish — so named because it resembled the figure of a man on a cross — John gazed at it in awestruck wonder, solemnly crossed himself, backed timidly away, and stuttered in a touchingly reverent manner, "That's almost as good as going to church. I'd give a good deal to own it." Al Smith (John's manager in 1884) was accustomed to lecture him very sternly for drinking so much; and John would be exceedingly humble and act very much like a naughty schoolboy. Swishing his large red handkerchief copiously around his red eyes, he would whimper, "I can't help it, Al. Everybody's running after me with, 'John, have a drink' here and 'John, have a drink' there. I don't like to make anybody mad by refusing. So, how can I help it?" Then Al, shaking eight monitory fingers and two angry thumbs in John's face, would snappishly reply, "See, see, you're ruining your health; see, don't you see I'm right?"

When John was feeling generous, he would whirl through the streets, throwing quantities of small

change right and left at the crowds of small boys who always tagged him whenever he appeared in public. But when he was vicious, everybody gave him as wide a berth as possible. Stories — largely apocryphal, perhaps — are still told, illustrating his dreadful behavior on such occasions. He would come swaggering and swirling into some favorite saloon and whoop, "I'll lick any man in the house right here now! Them's my sentiments! John L. Sullivan, that's me!" Then he would go tearing around, smashing all the glassware in the place and afterward grandly pay for it; or he would offer to drink twice as much liquor, of any sort, as any one present, and would belch forth shouts of victorious joy as his less gifted challengers sprawled, one after another, on the floor.

One day when he was even more hilarious than usual — no small praise — he became obsessed with the determination that, despite all the powers in earth or heaven, he *would* have a hair cut. So he staggered forth from his home and went lurching gaily along, good-naturedly thumping and slapping on the back everybody whom he chanced to meet, and calling those whom he knew by their pet names. Finally, having left a wake of highly indignant and highly amused people behind him, he reached his favorite barber shop. As he lumbered

in, he seized two men who had the bad luck to be nearest him and brought them together, back to back, with a thunderous crash. Then, all at once, he happened to notice that his own particular chair was usurped by an unknown customer. After great effort he reached the unsuspecting occupant and whacked his right fist down upon the doomed man's head; then, shaking his left fist in the face of his dazed and almost unconscious victim, he croaked in a guttural tone that could barely be distinguished, "You little, bald-headed cuss, what 'er you gettin' a haircut for? You need one 'bout as much as a baby." Fortunately, just at this time the terrified little man recovered the use of his limbs. Leaping from the chair, and scattering towels, scissors, and razors in every direction, he hurled himself out of the doorway. But John was still only half appeased; and, while the trembling barber gingerly attempted to clip his heavy locks, he continued to cuff and kick the bootblack who was daubing his shoes. These various activities, however, restored his good humor, and he concluded his visit by giving the maltreated bootblack two dollars, and smiling in a sickly, stupid way at some romantically inclined girls who had come boldly in to collect some snippings of their hero's hair.

His sprees became more and more frequent, until they began to interfere seriously with his pugilistic engagements. Once, when he was scheduled to meet an unknown opponent at eight in the evening, his friends found him at seven o'clock sprawled out on a bench, wheezing and gasping in a drunken semi-slumber. The case was plainly desperate, and they therefore decided to use desperate remedies. After they had succeeded in partially arousing him, they poured this dire prophecy into his ears: "John you don't realize what you're going to run up against to-night. We've seen the fellow and he's a regular terror." John merely grunted and told them to get out of the room; but, after a great deal of effort, they managed to drag him into his dressing room, where they put his head under a faucet, rubbed his face with bay rum and pulled him out on the stage — and he promptly sank down into a chair. But when time was called, a marvelous change came over him. Leaping ferociously forward, he struck one blow — and the "regular terror" was a senseless lump. Then John retired to the dressing room, sprawled on the same bench, and promptly went to sleep again.

Very frequently, too, he was arrested for public intoxication. Indeed, the Boston police vied with each other in a friendly competition to see who could

hale John before a court most frequently, for in this way an enviable notoriety was gained — their names would appear in print next day beside the name of Boston's most renowned citizen. One day John stepped on a street-car, leading his pet dog with him. The conductor, who unfortunately failed to recognize the passenger, snapped, "No dogs on here! I'll kick him off!" "If you do," retorted John, "you'll go off yourself." The conductor at once made good his promise — and so did John. A policeman near by, overjoyed at his unexpected good fortune, at once placed Sullivan under arrest. When he came before the court, the judge fined him \$100 and inquired, "Anything to say, John?" "Yes," he chuckled; "let me hit him again and I'll pay you \$200."

Another policeman, who hoped to make a name for himself, was less fortunate. Happening to see John cavorting around in a street to the delight of an enthusiastic audience, the officer stepped up and said, "You're drunk; you're under arrest." "That ain't true," said John, with a prodigious grin, "but even if it was I'll be sober to-morrow, while you'll be a damned fool all your life." The poor policeman was so utterly taken aback by this retort that he beat an undignified retreat, amid the jeers of the gleeful onlookers.

Drunk or sober, however, Sullivan was still the champion. From September, 1883, to May, 1884, he went with a theatrical troupe which gave exhibitions at over two hundred places. His part in this "variety show and athletic combination" was the same as of old. He fought all challengers who dared to face him, on successive nights, and when no one appeared he gave a boxing exhibition with a traveling partner. During these months, fifty-nine men tried to win the coveted \$1,000, but they all met with the same woeful fate. One unfortunate, whom John disposed of in two seconds at Knoxville, Tennessee, recovered his senses in twenty minutes and inquired, "Did I win?" Sullivan thought this question was so insulting that he immediately knocked the egotist out again, for an even longer period of time.

In Indiana John once faced a ponderous caveman called "The Tripper of Cornellsville", who, according to frightful stories that had been circulated, had on various occasions "lifted over eight hundred pounds and knocked down a bull with his fists." At the beginning, the Hoosier Goliath came strutting forth in the utmost confidence that he would soon lay the champion low. His excessively vain behavior gave both Sullivan and his manager their cue: whenever a particularly formidable challenger

appeared, they employed a device that would have warmed the cockles of P. T. Barnum's heart. The manager said, in a loud stage whisper, "Why, this chap'll murder you, John! I guess we'd better postpone this meeting." The audience at once went into a frenzy — for, as Sullivan later explained, "We used to pull that kind of stuff right along to get the crowd worked up." When the fight began John appeared to be very nervous, and every one howled with delight at the prospect of seeing a new champion made that night. The challenger naturally grew more and more overconfident, and smiled in a most irritating way during the first round, as he pursued his apparently discomfited rival around the ring. But in the second round Sullivan suddenly changed his tactics. The look of abject fear, carefully simulated for the occasion, was replaced by that ineffable sneer that had already given him the high distinction of being called "the toughest-looking man in America." In a flash, he smote his antagonist under the left ear; and, as a result, when time was called for the third round, "the Yahoo was still asleep." When, after a long delay, he finally came out of his slumber, he inquired whether he "had fell off a barn." Informed that something far worse than that had happened to him, he mournfully re-

sponded, "Well, I guess I never was cut out for a prize fighter."

II

By this time, the nation was ready to fall down at Sullivan's feet. Nothing was too good for him — there had never been anybody like him before — there never *would* be anybody like him again. His arrival at any town or city was the event of the year — almost of the century. Business was suspended and everybody went on a Roman holiday when the "Noblest Roman of Them All" came on the scene. Every schoolboy considered it a matter of honor to play hookey and follow John wherever he went. At this time the old-fashioned horse-car was still the chief means of metropolitan travel; and, to prove to the crowds that he was the veritable dare-devil that folk mythology had created, he would often run up to one of these cars when it was in full motion, seize hold and swing himself aboard, while shrieks of mingled horror and delight sounded on every side. Every neck was stretched to its utmost capacity, and every pair of eyes tried to follow him as, dressed in a big gray sweater, gray sport trousers, and a dirty-looking striped cap, he went swaggering along. Meanwhile all sorts of soulful ejaculations arose from the crowd:

"That's him, ain't it?" "No, that ain't him, *that's* him!" "No, it ain't; I tell you, I seen him go up that way!" "Big?" "You bet!"

And if this was true throughout the land, how much more true was it of Boston! Conditions there soon became so bad that, whenever John ventured forth, he was in almost constant danger of being seriously injured by the worshipping thousands who mobbed him. Boston's most eminent citizens were ready to back him with any sum, "from a dollar to the Bunker Hill Monument", as one of them put it. A certain play, very popular in those days, contained this bit of dialogue between two characters: "Are you from Boston?" "Yes." "Know any big folks there?" "Yes." "Know John L.?" "Yes." "Ever shake hands with him?" "Yes." "Let me shake the hand that shook the hand of John L. Sullivan!"

Eventually, as his fame continued to grow, John was forced to remain indoors most of the time, to escape his idolizing friends. No matter where he was, no matter how inopportune the moment might be, they came and came and came. Once, while he was stopping in a Western city, an intimate friend came to his hotel and found him sitting, glum and sullen, in his room. "John, are you going to stay caged up here all day?" he was asked.

"Yes," he grumbled. "Rather than run the danger of that gang laying for me in front of the hotel. D'you know, if I was to go out there now, I'd be grabbed by the arms and legs, and almost pulled to pieces by fellows that want to feel my muscle?"

Just then a man with a tragic stride and a stagey voice poked his scrawny neck through the door and asked in a hoarse whisper, "Is it him?" "It is," replied John's friend. The visitor stared steadfastly at Sullivan for about a minute, and then repeated, "*Is* it him?" "Yes, it *is* him; get the hell out of here!" snapped the now thoroughly angry friend. But the fellow still remained rooted to the spot, enveloping John with hypnotized eyes and mechanically reiterating, "Is it him? Is it him?" Sullivan, utterly weary and morose, endured this scrutiny for some two minutes; then he suddenly bounced from his chair, clamped his right hand around the man's bony neck and his left hand around one skinny leg, and pitched the intruder out of the room down the adjacent stairway. But the victim was supremely happy — he could no longer doubt that he had seen the great John L. in the flesh, for what other living man could have handled him like that? Henceforth he could tell his children, and perhaps his children's children, that he was one of the favored people who

had won the rare honor of being thrown out of a room by the world hero. "*It is him! It is him!*" he chanted, as he bumped from one step to the other, until he finally landed in a heap at the bottom of the stairway.

Numbers of people were in the habit of buying tickets so that they could travel on Sullivan's train, in order to win notoriety or to play on the champion's sympathies. Once a Methodist clergyman quieted his conscience so thoroughly that he plucked up courage to enter the smoking car where Sullivan was playing cards, and introduced himself thus: "Mr. Sullivan, I've read a great deal about you and your generous deeds, and I pray God will spare you many years to come." He then went on to explain that he had been forced to stop midway in the erection of a church, on account of his inability to secure sufficient funds. "Won't some of your psalm singers cough up?" John inquired. "Oh, no, Mr. Sullivan, they're too poor!" wailed the preacher; and tenderhearted John, in order that he might be left to his poker game in peace, gave the delighted ecclesiastic \$100.

But clergymen by no means included all the types of people who played on Sullivan's gullible nature. A clever broker once induced him to invest \$32,000 in copper stock. Several months

later, after a series of unusually expensive jamborees, John was in acute financial distress, and he therefore attempted to recover his investment. But he soon discovered that neither the money nor the stock was available — a state of affairs that made him wag his head in despair. “I hate to say it,” he confided to a friend, “but there’s \$32,000 of mine froze up in copper stocks, and I’m wondering if there’ll ever be a thaw big enough to bring it back into my pocket. I’m a good loser, but I can’t help thinking of the thousands of miles I’ve traveled to scrape that \$32,000 together, and the bum meals I’ve et at punk hotels, and the night runs in sleepers I don’t fit, and sometimes nothing but plain water to drink. I ain’t no quitter, but I’d like to have them show me something coming out of that hole. Anyhow, I’ve got lots of good company. Lots of other nuts thought they could cop the copper stocks, just like I did.”

Reporters came to see him by the dozen, and, always glad of an opportunity to advertise himself, he generally treated them well and rarely had any trouble in answering their myriads of questions. But one day a Baltimore cub, fresh from classes in advanced English Composition, came to interview John, and hurled a mass of polysyllables at him. “How, sir,” he began, “do you manage to

do such terrible execution ; is it by sheer physical strength, or exceptional skill, or both ?” “What d’you say ?” John parried, in open-mouthed amazement. “I am desirous of ascertaining how you manipulate your hands with such force and accuracy as to succeed in annihilating every opponent you have yet encountered,” explained the youthful prodigy. John then staggered back ; his tongue protruded, his eyes glazed, his fists involuntarily clenched, and he seemed to be on the verge of suffering an apoplectic stroke. Fortunately, his manager sensed the awful situation, and saved the reporter’s life by urging him to flee before John recovered himself.

A New York reporter, who was curiously strait-laced, felt moved to comment in this way on Sullivan’s similarity to Socrates in the matter of corrupting the youth : “The lamentable feature of these gatherings of worshippers at the shrine of the slug-god is the presence of throngs of boys.” He then cited two terrible examples. One youth, of whom a friend inquired, “Johnny, are you going to dinner ?” had peevishly retorted, “Dinner be damned ! I’m going to see Sullivan.” Another New York boy, an ardent admirer of Sullivan, had timorously approached him one day and asked, in a quavering tone, what sort of food he usually ate.

John, who was feeling out of sorts, glared at the shaking lad and boomed: "Blood, nothing but blood! I drain a boy about your size three times a day." Logically enough, a rumor soon spread that Sullivan actually did live on blood — for the most part, the blood of cattle — and slaughter houses all through the country were forthwith besieged by anemic youths who were eager to emulate their hero's example.

Women of all sorts tried to get in touch with him. Early one morning, a card was brought to his room. He glowered at it, and ordered the bearer to "show the duffer up." "'Tain't no duffer, sir. Anyhow, I guess not, 'cause it's a girl," the boy replied. John was momentarily taken aback; then he asked, "What's her sort?" "Daisy," was the laconic answer. "Rise her up," John countered with equal brevity. In a few moments a dainty little miss tripped into the room, gave John a winning smile, and asked him to write her a few autographs, so that she could sell them at a church fair. John, disappointed though he was, quickly rose to the occasion and responded in a graciously tragic way, "Oh, what'r you giving me? I ain't no good at writing, but I'll have my manager make as many of my — what d'you call 'em, as you want." She then told him, gently but

firmly, that this would hardly do ; so pens, ink, and paper were ordered and, after many laborious efforts in which he spoiled more than a dozen pens and ruined a quantity of stationery, John finally succeeded in scratching down about twenty badly blotched but fairly legible signatures. "I always like to do what I can for religion," he assured her, as, grasping her hand and most of her forearm between his ink-stained fingers, he bade her a courteous good-by.

But there was one form of notoriety that John indignantly disclaimed. Certain intense worshippers of simon-pure English and American blood had insisted that he was of Anglo-Saxon descent. Finally, a letter signed with Sullivan's name appeared, in which the hideous charge was repeated. John's righteous wrath, stirred by this low forgery, took the form of a flaming speech which was delivered at the end of one of his exhibition bouts.

"Of course I never tore off no such letter!" he roared in tones that shook the rafters. "I never knowed a Sullivan that wan't straight Irish without any chasers to it. There may be some white-washed Sullivans, but I don't know 'em and don't want to. In Boston, on the seventeenth of March, they celebrate Saint Patrick's Day and Evacuation Day at the same time ; for the British beat it

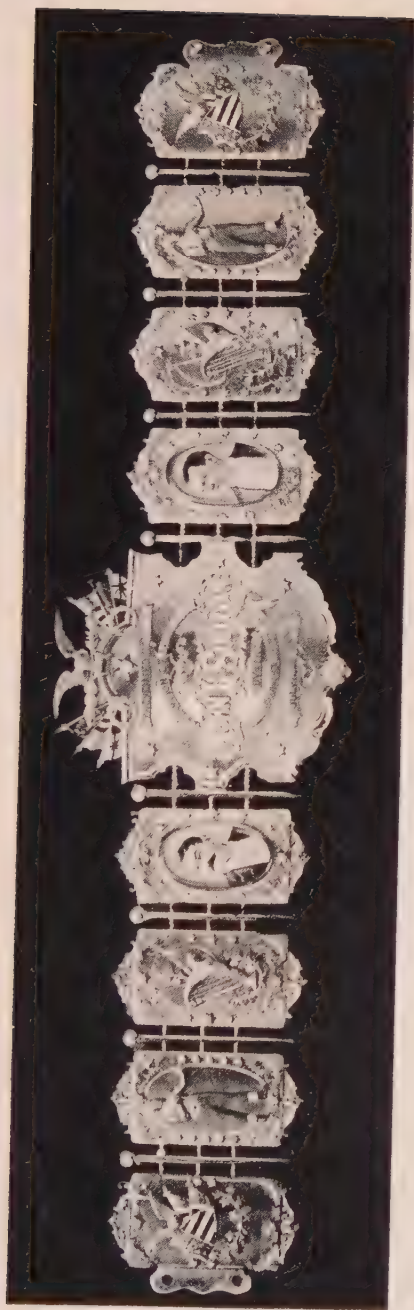
from Boston on that day when the decision went against them more than a hundred years ago. If there's any Angle-Saxon Sullivans on the job, you bet your sweet life they cover it up, for they know the Sullivans who ain't Angle-Saxons would do 'em up good if they got wise to it."

Public enthusiasm for John finally reached its height in the presentation of the famous diamond-and-gold belt. The illustrious ceremony took place in the Boston Theatre on August 8, 1887. Boston's mayor, her aldermen, the members of her Common Council were all there, in boxes and on the stage. Men in full evening regalia filled the orchestra, while the galleries were packed with a mob of howling rowdies. It happened that John was late, and so the gallery toughs began to screech out uncomplimentary, not to say indecent, remarks which advanced bold speculations as to the probable reasons for Sullivan's tardiness as well as the moral caliber of various individuals in the audience. Suddenly Pat Sheedy rushed to the center of the stage, shook his massive fists at the shrieking gang, and, in a voice that rose above the terrific pandemonium, roared out, "You fellows want to remember that Sullivan and myself are gentlemen with gentlemen, but among toughs we're kings!" Since not even the most disreputable brute within

the range of Pat's voice dared to dispute the truth of his dictum, the din stopped at once.

When John at last appeared, no coronation ceremony ever surpassed the scene that followed. All animosities were instantly forgotten. With the precision of Junker troops, the crowd rose and spontaneously raised a series of huzzas that threatened to bring the whole building down in ruins. When, in about a quarter of an hour, comparative silence fell, there followed what was perhaps the greatest moment in a life that was an almost unbroken succession of great moments. A Councilman, who had already achieved enviable distinction by the gallantry he had shown Queen Liliuokalani during her recent visit to Boston, stepped pompously forth and clasped the \$10,000 belt around the heroic torso. Next day the local papers stated that the champion "made quite a creditable speech" — a remark that was much more truthful than their characterization of the audience as "an eminently respectable gathering."

The official description of the belt ran thus: "It is forty-eight inches in length and twelve inches in width, and is the largest piece of flat gold ever seen in this country. . . . It took about three months to complete it. The panels are studded with [397] diamonds." This, however, sounds



THE BOSTON BELT.

Valued at ten thousand dollars, and presented to Sullivan by Boston admirers in 1887.

rather cold and lifeless, and John should be allowed to add the necessary personal touch: "The belt is my own personal property. My name on the belt is composed of two hundred and fifty stones. . . . The one I got from the *Police Gazette* looks like a dog collar alongside of this one."

Naturally enough, the glorious emblem was eagerly sought by collectors and crooks. At the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, a clever imitation of the belt was exhibited. Pat Sheedy himself, who was completely taken in, excitedly urged all of his friends to see it. Nothing in the whole place, so he swore, nothing at all — not even the two-headed fat lady — was so well worth traveling hundreds of miles to see. The fakir who showed this counterfeit made over \$200 a week, and was busily devising plans to show some dozens of similar imitations throughout the land, when his trickery was detected and a just fate laid him low. A strict regard for historical truth demands the fact to be recorded that the actual career of this notorious work of art was decidedly less romantic than its illegitimate progeny. Before many years had passed, John was forced to pawn it. Then it was redeemed — and repawned — until finally poor John was compelled to surrender his treasured trophy to his creditors forever.

III

In the meantime John had more than justified all the clamorous enthusiasm of his idolizers. The mighty right arm, and the scarcely less mighty left, had continued to rise and fall with pistonlike precision against all the challengers for his crown. But such sentimentalists had become more and more rare; the myth of the superhuman, unbeatable, all-slaughtering champion was now at its height. All his defeated foes told the same dismal story: they had been whipped by the ogreish tactics of the monster even before the actual fight had started. When they entered the ring, the hypnotic power of the champion's wicked eyes irresistibly compelled them to peer at him. There he sat, his clenched fists resting on his knees, his elbows stuck out, his glittering eyes darting snaky glances toward his opponent. Then the shaking foe, rising to meet his doom, felt like a bird charmed by the terrible fascination of the serpent's eye. Drawn toward the human hurricane that was merely biding its time before overwhelming him, the victim had not long to wait. Sullivan would rise slowly and, slapping his left hand against his thigh, would pause an instant before making his fatal leap. ♦ Then, having found the right opening,

he would spring forward — crash ! crash ! — and Jove's thunderbolts had claimed another sacrifice. "If you want to know what it is to be struck by lightning, just face Sullivan one second," was the advice of one vanquished contestant to an ardently romantic youth who had been dreaming dreams of removing Sullivan's crown. But the foolish boy was still unconvinced, until. . . . After it was all over, the much-battered dreamer became an equally ardent realist.

Such was the legend ; but, like most legends, it was not without flaws. Drunk with applause and liquor most of the time, John became more and more careless and easy-going in his training methods. When he met John Laflin on November 10, 1884, he was in very bad shape — so bad, in fact, that for two rounds Laflin actually drove him around the ring and almost forced him through the ropes. But in the third round John came to life, and banged his rival in such a vicious fashion that the police interfered in order to forestall the impending murder. Pat Sheedy had been so certain that Sullivan would win this bout with the utmost ease that he had offered to bet \$1,000 on John's ability to whip another pugilist — Dominick McCaffrey — one hour after the Laflin fray. McCaffrey's manager, however, wisely retorted

that "for obvious reasons he wouldn't be foolish enough to allow Dominick to meet Sullivan under such conditions." But when he saw John in action, he came rushing up to Sheedy and implored to be allowed to accept the bet; but Pat retorted that, for obvious reasons, he wouldn't be foolish enough to allow John to fight McCaffrey under such conditions.

Arrangements had been made for Sullivan to meet Alf Greenfield one week later; but a few days after the Laflin affair, the New York evening papers printed a frightful announcement. The Mayor had sent this spirited manifesto to the Board of Police Commissioners: "I observe by the morning papers that a boxing match occurred at Madison Square Garden on Monday evening, between two persons, which partook of all the elements of a prize-fight. I believe that such exhibitions are disgraceful to the city in the highest degree, demoralising to young men, and in their tendency leading to disrespect of law and order. I therefore respectfully request that your department henceforth prevent all attempts to hold such exhibitions within the city."

It was thus plain that the coming contest was in dire danger, and both Sullivan and Greenfield went to court to have the matter argued out.



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SULLIVAN THE FIGHTER.

Sullivan's counsel maintained that the proposed match was "not a prize-fight in any sense, but merely an exhibition of scientific sparring, the contestants making no attempt to knock out or injure each other." A request was then made to have the case carried to a higher court, and the "prisoners" were turned over to the custody of their counsels. The request was granted, and "all parties in the affair crossed Sixth Avenue to Johnny Carman's for internal refreshments." A large crowd of onlookers, delighted at the opportunity of seeing their hero at close range, came rushing in and almost swept the small party off its feet in their efforts to get at John. Only one way of escape presented itself, and so he dashed upstairs and hid himself in a bedroom closet.

Three days later, the higher court rendered this notable decision: "The question is whether the defendants, Sullivan and Greenfield, intended to engage in a friendly sparring-match, not calculated to injure either party, or in a serious physical contest. The latter is illegal, whether with or without gloves; the former, as a mere exhibition of skill, is not illegal. It is difficult to determine the illegality of these exhibitions in advance. . . . Of course there will be hitting . . . but the blows are to have no relation to the injury or exhaustion

of either party. It is impossible to say on this testimony that a *prima facie* case of intention to commit a crime has been made out. . . . Upon this evidence I feel constrained to discharge the prisoners, leaving to the police to prevent any prize-fight or unlawful contention, directly or indirectly, whether gloves are used or not. If blows are struck which are likely to cause injury to the parties, or inflame their passions or the passions of the bystanders, or which cause a disturbance or breach of the peace, or which are in any just sense brutal or revolting, it will be the duty of the police to act promptly. . . . But as I am unable to see that anything of this kind is contemplated . . . I cannot permit these people to be convicted in advance of any overt act."

This judicial opinion was more than satisfactory to both parties, and on the evening of November 18 the two rivals went smiling to Madison Square Garden, in order to demonstrate the wisdom of the official permission. But, alas! Barely twenty-five hundred people were on hand, for everybody had read the papers and was fearful lest there should be no contest, or that police supervision would be so strict that it would be a lifeless affair. As it turned out, their doubts were justified. Sullivan was in such mortal fear of legal proceedings that

he merely thrust his fists around without making any special attempt to connect them with any part of Greenfield's body. Thus Greenfield was not obliged to drop on the floor to save himself, as most of his predecessors had done; yet he wisely took no dangerous chances. Claspings John firmly around the neck in a most affectionate manner, he held on like grim death while the audience jeered, crowed, meowed, and barked. This enraged John so much that, forgetting his fears, he unclenched Alf's arms and started after him with all his habitual fury. In less than ten seconds he had cut a great gash on Greenfield's forehead — whereupon the police dashed into the ring and arrested both men.

On the following morning, they were haled to court, and this complaint was read: "John L. Sullivan and A. Greenfield did wickedly and unlawfully set upon foot, instigate and carry on a glove-fight or contention with the fists . . . and further unlawfully caused 4,000 persons to assemble together in a public hall to witness the contest, and the accused beat each other with their fists on the head and body in a cruel and inhuman manner, outraging decency, shocking humanity, and tending to corrupt the public morals." A long legal battle followed, in which fiery arguments were hurled about by the opposing lawyers; but nothing

was accomplished except the release of both culprits from custody.

Sullivan and Greenfield renewed their interrupted hostilities in Boston on January 12, 1885. Bostonian culture was so far ahead of that which dominated New York that there was not the least danger of any official interference; yet, for some reason or other, their second skirmish was much tamer than the first. For four rounds they toddled amiably about the ring, and in the final round "they stopped before time was called and talked awhile," which caused the crowd to hiss. John was so thunderstruck at such impolite behavior on the part of his fellow townsmen — for nothing like this had ever occurred in Boston before — that, when the decision was awarded to him, he made an unusually sincere speech. "Gentlemen," he solemnly uttered, "all I have to say is I've treated Mr. Greenfield with respect, and if the police allowed us to go on I'd have done more serious work." At this point shouts of "Police! Hell, they ain't no police!" arose, but John paid no attention to them and plunged steadily on. "I ask the press to give me a fair show. There's been lots of charges against me lately, some of which ain't true. Mr. Greenfield is a good man. I give him credit for what he's done. He's my

friend and always will be." Nevertheless, no one was satisfied, for everybody felt that Sullivan was getting too smart — he had discovered, so it was charged, that he could use "police interference" as a device to enable him to win without extending himself.

Paddy Ryan, obsessed with the peculiar optimism that characterizes defeated presidents, nations, and dogs as well as defeated pugilists, insisted that, if he could have only one more chance at Sullivan, he would win back his lost laurels. On January 19 his opportunity came, and he took advantage of it by losing the decision in thirty seconds. Bluecoats were everywhere — scattered through the audience, lolling at the exits, and sprawling around the edge of the ring. Both contestants were sternly cautioned that the engagement was to be nothing more than a boxing match, and that it would be stopped the instant one or the other showed signs of undue temper or activity. John was very fat, but Paddy was even fatter. They waddled around good-naturedly for about twenty seconds, when each launched a simultaneous blow that hurt. Then they sprang furiously at each other, and John was just about to deliver what would probably have been the *coup de grâce* when the police took a hand. The wretched spec-

tators, who were just beginning to hope that they might, after all, get their money's worth, groaned, catcalled, and hissed, but all to no avail.

This fiasco, however, had at least one good result. John had at last discovered that his free-and-easy life had made him heavy and sluggish, and he therefore spent part of the summer of 1885 in Maine. For Maine, then under the proud distinction of being the only dry State in the Union, saved him from an excess of temptation. But Maine also won renown as the first State to invent the art of bootlegging, and so John occasionally fell from grace. During the next year he had several unimportant encounters, but none of them was particularly distinguished. He merely won — that was all.

Still unsatisfied and unconvinced, Paddy Ryan yet clamored for "just one more chance." In November, 1886, Sullivan magnanimously allowed Paddy to totter around for three unbelievably dull rounds. Perhaps, however, John was in a good humor merely because there was at least one man in America who still cherished foolish dreams, for he was hard put to it to find anybody at all, even asthmatic ex-champions, to face him. Indeed, John was beginning to feel like the princesses in fairy tales who are unable to find husbands,

because the terms of matrimony are made so arduous that few suitors appear.

It was probably because he had not of late had sufficient exercise in the ring that John broke his right arm against the massive jaw of Patsy Cardiff; and not even the fact that Patsy's whole body was in almost as bad a condition as John's broken arm gave him much consolation. This contest took place in Minneapolis in January, 1887; the admission price was two dollars and over ten thousand persons were present. Cardiff had trained faithfully, in order to take the best advantage of the greatest opportunity of his life, but Sullivan, who weighed about two hundred and thirty pounds, was at first very clumsy and heavy of foot. The accident happened in the third round. John, maddened at his opponent's cleverness, had come to life at the end of the second round and had pummeled Cardiff most unmercifully, but he still remained, staggering and tottering, on his feet. When the third round opened, John crashed his right fist with such terrific force against the point of Patsy's chin that one bone in the arm was broken — and, even worse than that, Patsy still refused to fall. Crippled as he was, John fought on with his left arm until, at the end of the sixth round, a draw was declared amid a scene of tremendous excite-

ment. Since the bone failed to re-knit properly, it had to be rebroken and reset; and not until late in the summer of 1887 was Sullivan once more ready for action.

This long period of inactivity made him very much depressed; he spent most of his convalescence in bemoaning his fate and casting bitter aspersions at Cardiff. When asked what he thought of Patsy's fighting abilities, he unbosomed himself thus: "What do I think of Cardiff? As a fighter, I don't think he's worth a damn. Do you suppose, if *I'd* been in his place and saw a man's arm hanging by his side, that I wouldn't have punched the arm to see what was wrong with it? Instead of hitting me where my arm was broke, he run around the ring like a big coward. His blowing about drawing blood from my mouth is a lie and he knows it. Besides, he ain't no gentleman. That night, after I broke my arm, he insulted me by calling me bad names because he knew it was safe. If I ever meet him again after my arm's patched up, I'll make him chew them remarks of his all over again, and don't you forget it."

John had now seen America as a whole, and nearly two hundred Americans in particular, at his feet. Accordingly, he thought it was high time to look for other worlds to conquer; and on Octo-

ber 27, 1887, he sailed for England — with the purpose of winning “money, glory, and revenge”, as he told his friends. Those same friends flooded his palatial cabin with floral pieces and presents; and no president, sailing to lay down laws for the peace of Europe and the salvation of all mankind, could have been treated in a more regal manner than Sullivan, who was merely sailing to fight Europeans. At Liverpool and London such dense crowds jammed the streets in his honor that traffic was utterly disrupted and a body-guard was necessary in order to enable him to make any progress at all. But John refused to get excited, for he felt that he was only receiving his due. One Englishman was roused from his habitual stolidity by Sullivan’s utter ease and unconcern to inquire, “I say, don’t all this knockin’ about affect you a bit?” John cast an appraising eye at the questioner and replied briefly, “Why should I get excited? The same thing happens to me every day at home.”

One crowd was so impenetrable that he was unable to reach the coach, drawn by four white horses, that had been especially equipped for him, and he was forced to bolt pell-mell into a hearse near by. But even there he was not safe from molestation, for so many enthusiasts jumped in

after him that the bottom fell out, and all the intruders were tumbled to the ground in an almost inextricable mass. At length John's brawny shoulders emerged from the twisted pile of churning arms and legs. Sweeping his arms like flails around him, he partially cleared a path and leaped to freedom with such agility that one onlooker gleefully chortled, "Just see 'im! Ain't 'e a cat and a locomotive combined?" John was then hoisted on the shoulders of two strong men and carried in triumph to the coach. Only one really unpleasant episode marred his arrival: the custom officers at Liverpool insisted that he must pay \$600 duty on his diamond belt. But he absolutely refused to do so, and the trophy was accordingly shipped back to Boston. John was very sad about this, for, deprived of his belt, he was almost as helpless as Samson after his domestic haircut.

The English papers battled with each other in a friendly contest to see which one could pay the finest compliments to the distinguished guest. After hundreds of encomiums had been showered on him, honors finally went to the paper which produced this specimen: "At last America has sent us a great entertainer of the male variety. We have had Booth, and all the men of the American drama,



JOHN L. IN A LITERARY ASPECT.

From a photograph in The Albert Davis Collection.

but none have shone. Sullivan, however, comes to us as a sunbeam to shed his lustrous light upon sportsmen and others." The lustrous sunbeam radiated his effulgent glory fifty-one times in various English cities. He cleared over \$25,000 from these engagements, which was, as some one felt impelled to remark, "an extraordinary sum, considering the condition of the kingdom and the small wages paid workingmen."

Ireland of course gave him the most tumultuous reception of all. In Dublin two brass bands tried to drown each other out by a simultaneous rendition of "See, the Conquering Hero Comes." Mike Sullivan had carefully coached his son as to the sort of remarks he should make on the soil of his fatherland; and so, after the two bands had nearly murdered each other, John slowly and painstakingly spoke the words his father had prepared for him: "I thank you for your kindness to me this evening. As a descendant of Erin's isle, I will endeavor always to prove myself worthy of your attention and to uphold the honor of my father's native land." So generously did his kinsmen patronize him that he took in more money in one week than six weeks in England had netted him. Nor was money by any means all that the Irish gave him. When he departed, he carried

with him this collection of souvenirs: one tweed suit, seventeen blackthorn sticks, four jugs of whisky, a lovely design in shamrocks, forty-five letters begging him to give something to various charitable institutions, and an infinitely greater number of epistles that proposed matrimony.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS — INTO THE DEPTHS

I

“MONEY, glory, and revenge” — by this time John was rolling in wealth, and had come to accept adulation as his by divine right; but . . . The ghost of the undefeated Charlie Mitchell haunted him in his dreams, day and night. Even his frequently repeated self-defense — that he had failed to overthrow Mitchell because the elusive Englishman was a “bombastic sprinter” — failed to lay the ghost. John was champion of America, to be sure; but Mitchell had twice blocked his path toward the goal of world’s champion. He had come to Europe, in fact, chiefly to fight Mitchell, and it was with a smile unusually grim and ferocious, even for him, that John finally signed articles to meet the Englishman on Baron Rothschild’s estate at Chantilly, on March 10, 1888.

These articles were signed in London in November, 1887. At first it seemed that no fight could

be arranged, for both Sullivan and Mitchell continued to raise objections to various articles. The size of the proposed ring caused more trouble than anything else. John sternly insisted that it must be only sixteen feet square, for he intended it to be small enough so that his foe would not be able to cavort around as he had done during their previous battles. But Mitchell refused to agree; he had no desire to get in quarters so tight that he would be unable to prance away if things should get too hot for him. "Jolly Chollie" eventually made a remark so pointedly personal that Sullivan leaped up and prepared to settle the contest on the spot, without any preliminary negotiations whatever; but he finally cooled off and a contract that was moderately satisfactory to both was signed.

On the day of the battle, John dressed himself in an unusually gay fashion. In addition to his conventional fighting togs, he had wreathed himself in an immense Stars and Stripes silk handkerchief that had an Irish harp embroidered in one corner. His manner, too, was far more arrogant and cocksure than usual. Upon entering the ring, he pulled out and flourished a £500 note, and dared Mitchell again and again, in a most insulting fashion, to cover it. No sooner had the battle started than Mitchell began his usual Marathon. Twisting,

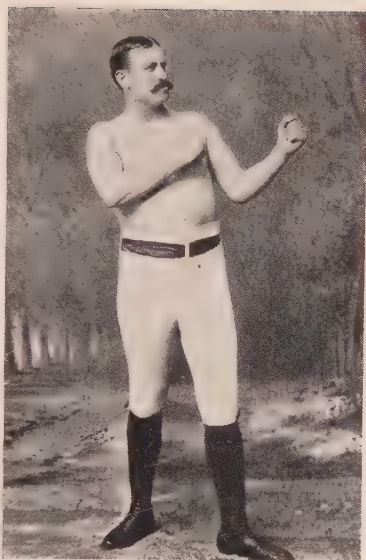
gliding, dodging, and forever retreating, he completely baffled Sullivan. To add to John's discomfort, rain fell from the tenth round on, and he was seized with a chill and shook as with ague while he splashed around on the muddy turf. Once in a while, to be sure, he would succeed in cornering his ghostly antagonist and would then knock him down. After the first of these knockdowns, Mitchell's father-in-law (who had bet his last guinea on the fight) breathed the sigh, "There goes my boy!" When the same action was repeated, he groaned, "There goes my house!" And when, for the third time, Mitchell's body splashed mud in all directions, he shrieked in uncontrollable anguish, "There goes my estate and everything!" But, like Antaeus of old, after every fall to the ground Mitchell rose stronger, or at least fleetier, than ever. When the combat had lasted for about three hours, and it appeared that Sullivan might eventually catch his rival and deliver a finishing stroke, Charlie's second thrust his dripping head through the ropes and yelled, "Think of your wife, Charlie; think of your little babies at home crying for bread!" This touching appeal to his paternal instincts so aroused the wilting pugilist that he tore around with renewed strength; and ten minutes later a draw was declared.

Then broken-hearted John completely crumpled up and cried like a baby. How could he endure this disgrace! What consternation there would be among his friends in America when the news of his unbelievable failure was cabled home! Never, during the rest of his life, did he recover from the shock of this, his worst defeat. John was generally very magnanimous toward all the men whom he had whipped; for such poor fellows he entertained almost a fatherly affection. But he never mentioned Peter Jackson — the negro whom he steadfastly refused to fight, on the ground that he *was* a negro — without snarls of rage and mortified pride; and the mere sound of Mitchell's name always roused him to a frenzy of delightfully abusive language. Time after time, in his autobiography, he makes bitter reference to Mitchell and his methods; the Englishman is repeatedly called the "bombastic sprinter" who "spiked me so severely that my shoes were full of blood, and there are large scars on my shins yet." But for some reason or other — could it have been modesty? — he always refused to show those scars when his friends requested him to do so.

But just now he had no time to repine or even to weep much; for almost at the instant when the fight ended, French gendarmes arrested both



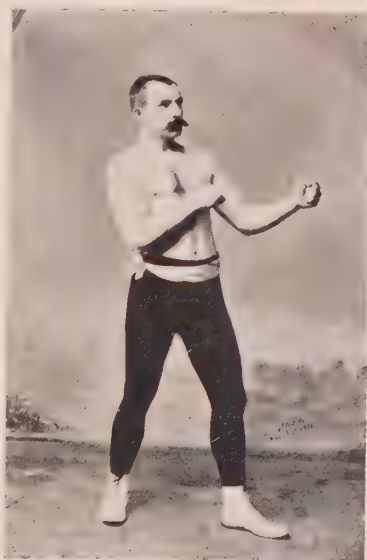
STEVE TAYLOR.



PADDY RYAN.



CHARLIE MITCHELL.



JAKE KILRAIN.

A QUARTET OF SULLIVAN'S RIVALS.

contestants and confined them over night in jail. Next day Sullivan was only too glad to deposit \$1,600 for bail, and no sooner had the prison doors closed behind him than he took French leave by fleeing to England on the first boat that sailed from Calais. Europe had lost all its charms for him — even Irish gifts and girls failed to attract him any longer — and so in April he returned to America.

In order to revive his drooping spirits, John now joined a traveling circus; but, after two months had passed, he was attacked by a serious and curiously complicated illness. "Due to several causes," so he cryptically remarked, he contracted "typhoid fever; the atmosphere of the circus wasn't the best in the world, and I'd been drinking some besides." Apparently he must have been doing other things than drinking, for in a later statement he averred that he had "typhoid fever, gastritic fever, inflammation of the bowels, heart trouble, circus itch, and liver complaint all combined. That was all. Aside from that, I was a well man." For nine weeks he lay in bed, attended by six doctors who served him in a fairly definite rotation: one physician treated him for typhoid fever, another for gastric fever, and so on. But in spite of everything, he was still alive at the end of the ninth week, though he had been given up

twice — “the doctors gave up my case as hopeless, but I told ’em that I couldn’t stand that kind of a decision, and that I’d beat ’em yet.” When the ninth week ended, he informed the sixth physician that he was going to his father’s house. “You’re mad; the trip’ll kill you!” snarled the liver complaint specialist. “I can’t help that,” groaned John. “I’ve been stretched out here ready to die for two months, and now I’m going to beat it” — and he did. “I got up out of that bed, hired a carriage, and after propping myself up in pillows, I set out for my father’s home ten miles away.” Safely arrived at his destination, he slowly recovered; but for some months he was much troubled with what was euphemistically called “incipient paralysis of the legs”, and was therefore obliged to hobble around on crutches. Oil massages and mild electric shocks apparently contributed to his recovery; at all events, by the close of 1888 he was once more approximately well.

During one stage of his illness, he had manifested a symptom that often accompanies liver complaint — he developed a monomania against rats. True enough, he explained this dire affliction by insisting that “a hell of a scrappy rat once run up my pant-leg and give me such a scare and a tussle that I’ve hated ’em ever since.” Yet this clever explanation

failed to cure the disease; and during his convalescence he had one serio-comic experience that was directly due to his obsession. He had gone to a New York hotel to rest up for a time, and had borrowed a friend's terrier to protect him against any rats that might chance to appear and disturb his slumbers; and the terrier was so well trained that he would raise a chorus of funereal howls at the slightest squeak.

One morning near daybreak, "when I hadn't been in bed long," the dog growled one of its most artistic growls. John awoke at once and lay sweating with fright, while he exposed one eye from the bedclothes to discover whether he could see the hateful marauder. Then he heard a slight knock at the door, which caused the terrier to excel his best previous efforts. "I called him back," narrated John, in telling the story later to a friend, "and, getting his nose between my fingers so he couldn't make any noise, I begun to snore and listened between snores. Pretty soon I heard somebody picking the lock, and in a couple of minutes two fellows stole into the room and made for my pants on the chair, where I kept my roll. Just as they got busy, I jumped out of bed and got between 'em and the door. They made a try to get past, but I floored 'em both, nobody saying a

word." The affair ended when, having told the would-be robbers to "behave yourselves", John ordered breakfast for three. While they ate it together, he told them that he would let them off this time, gave them enough money to buy decent clothes, and made them promise to "go straight, or take a clouting from me next time I met 'em." This fortunate episode completed John's cure; for he was so delighted at finding two murderous burglars in his room instead of a solitary rat, that he was soon entirely well again.

He needed to be, for the severest test of all was imminent. Though John had become older, fatter, slower, and more sodden, his greatest fight was still to come. The staunch, battle-scarred lion, slowly retreating toward his lair, was destined to make one final glorious stand against the enemy before his final defeat.

On July 8, 1889, the last bare-fist combat in America was fought by the champion and Jake Kilrain at Richburg, Mississippi. "The Artful Dodger" had already twice shown a keen desire to fight with Sullivan. When Jake heard that John's arm had been broken, he hurled an excessively bold challenge at him, and even claimed the championship on the ground that Sullivan had not properly acknowledged the challenge; but, after he learned

that the broken arm was once more as strong as ever, Jake became very silent. Again, when John's complicated illness laid him low, Jake exhausted all the devices of pugilistic rhetoric in an attempt to make Sullivan rise from his sickbed and enter the ring; but when John recovered, Jake once more silently stole away. The public unfortunately refused to forget Jake's literary indiscretions, and he was therefore forced into a position where he either had to meet Sullivan or earn an honest living in some other way. After long and serious meditation, Jake decided to take the great chance. . . . Who knew? Perhaps, after all, he might be lucky enough to re-fracture John's recently mended arm or injure his weakened liver, heart, or gastritic stomach.

When the time for the match had been agreed upon, every one supposed that Sullivan would realize the necessity of training hard for it. But his illness and his broken arm had forced him to abstain from a variety of pleasures for such a long time that he now went on a number of sprees that beggared all of his former excesses. One evening in May, 1889, when John was howling and teetering around a New York hotel bar, Jimmy Wakely — his present manager — entered with William Muldoon. For Wakely, who knew how John had been

behaving of late, had finally despaired of accomplishing anything alone, and accordingly brought Muldoon along with him. As the two men stepped up to John, he gallantly offered each a glass of whisky. Both sternly frowned at him and declined to drink. Then Wakely said, "Do you want to be a man, or do you want to be a bum all your days?" John hung his head in an access of sudden shame. "Come upstairs," Wakely continued, "we've got something to say to you." No one knows just what occurred, but at one A.M. John was ready to do anything his manager desired. He was told that he must depart to Muldoon's farm in western New York, and undergo whatever treatment Muldoon prescribed. "I know I can get John in shape to win," said Muldoon. "I don't expect to have any trouble in getting him to work. I'll feed him on plain, wholesome food and in two weeks you won't know him. He's got to get a new lining on his stomach and start life all over again."

But John's version of this affair was slightly different. "I realized now," he wrote, "that I was not so young as I had been. The long sickness had put several years on my life. I knew that I must have the best trainer to be got in the land. Consequently, I went to New York and there made

arrangements for William Muldoon to act as my trainer."

Once at the farm, John went to work with a will. Muldoon proved to be such a severe taskmaster that his pupil once "bucked out of harness", and they had a disagreement that might have ended very seriously had not Mike Cleary, John's boxing companion, come hastily between them. Sullivan rose early, took long walks, kicked a football, threw a ten-pound ball around, swung dumb-bells that weighed four pounds each, skipped the rope and went swimming. One day he was very nearly drowned. It was just at this time that the Johnstown flood happened, and all the streams around the training camp were swollen. One of Muldoon's dogs went safely through the rapids of a neighboring river, and John, who swore that no dog could do anything that *he* couldn't do, made the same trip. His shins struck against a rock, and he was laid up for some time, for, as he explained, "my shins had not recovered from the foul spiking of Charlie Mitchell in France and that added to the trouble."

The fight had been scheduled to take place in New Orleans, but the state officials refused to permit it, and it was therefore necessary to make a swift change of plans. Very early on the morning

of July 7, a special train slipped out of New Orleans and sped toward Richburg. The coaches were bursting with people; even the roofs were black with dare-devil passengers. The conductors were afraid to undertake the highly dangerous job of climbing up to collect fares, and as a result a large number of the acrobats rode free. Invited to come down and pay their passage, they naturally refused to do so — it was altogether too dangerous and troublesome, they insisted. Then the angry conductors tried to frighten them into submission by “shooting pistols up by the edge of the cars by the dangling legs, but it didn’t work.” Meanwhile in special mail cars Sullivan and Kilrain “worked out” in preparation for the mêlée, blissfully unconscious of the frightful commotion outside.

Impossible though it seems, the end of the journey was reached without serious mishap, and everybody rushed to the turf ring. Just then the county sheriff appeared and commanded, in the name of the great State of Mississippi, that there must be peace; having thus done his duty, he hastily retired and the fight commenced. Both rivals gave \$1,000 to the referee — personal bets on the outcome — and then leaped into the ring. Jake had been fortunate enough to secure Charlie

Mitchell as his second; inevitably, therefore, the contest soon developed into a race in which fleet-footed Jake completely outclassed his opponent. During the first round, it is true, Jake valiantly disregarded his second's repeated instructions, caught John unawares, and threw him with a cross-buttock grip; but at the beginning of the second round Sullivan retaliated in the same manner. This brought Jake to his senses, and during the rest of the fight he behaved like a man of Mitchell's own heart — in other words, he employed all manner of tricks. He hit below the belt, he spiked Sullivan's feet, he continued to run and duck. Finally, when John overtook him and began to knock him down with monotonous regularity, he deliberately floored himself and rolled around in order to avoid punishment.

At the beginning of the forty-fourth round, John foolishly drank a mixture of cold tea and whisky, and — but let him speak for himself: "There being too much liquor in the tea, and my stomach being in such a good condition, I threw it right off." His trainer, however, stoutly affirmed that John "threw up the tea and kept down the whisky", which, in the light of subsequent events, seems to have been the more probable explanation. For when Jake saw his rival making most embarrassing

contortions, he naturally believed that the contest was about over; and he was strengthened in this belief by Mitchell, who shouted with delight, "Slug 'im in the belly, Jake, slug 'im in the belly!" But Jake wisely refused to resort to such a dangerous device, and merely requested Sullivan to call the fight a draw. "Give it up, John; I've got you," he advised. John replied by knocking him down again. In the next round Sullivan, who was now becoming somewhat irritated, first floored Kilrain and then stamped on him, but the claim of a foul was not allowed. So round after round followed. At the end of each, John's second begged him to sit down and get a little rest; but he regularly replied, "What's the use of settin' down? I've got to get up again, ain't I?"

This fight, unparalleled in pugilistic history, continued under a broiling sun — the temperature was 120 — for seventy-five rounds. Kilrain was able to drag it out to such an unheard-of length because he sucked up quantities of whisky between rounds (over a quart in all), and Sullivan was able to continue merely because he was Sullivan. But at the end of the seventy-fifth round, it was feared that death from exhaustion might come to either or both pugilists, and Sullivan was accordingly declared to be the winner on

points. Neither one, as a matter of fact, was much hurt; but John was almost completely winded, and so was Kilrain though even in defeat he still retained enough breath and rhetoric to dictate this telegram to his hopefully waiting wife: "Nature gave out. Not hurt, though licked. Your husband." But this was his last gasp, for he then completely crumpled up and his doctor at once gave him a large dose of morphine and brandy.

Shortly afterward, both fighters boarded a train bound northeast, for they wished to leave the South as soon as possible in order to escape possible pursuit by officers of the law. They had traveled only a little distance when a report was spread that Mississippi militiamen were coming on a pursuing train. Sullivan, who was still dressed in his fighting clothes and whose hands were swollen to twice their natural size, realized that, if his train were overtaken, he would at once be recognized. He leaped from his seat, plunged through an open window while the train was going at a fair rate of speed, landed unhurt, and disappeared into a thicket. The train was halted and backed to the place where John had vanished. His friends then descended and beat around among the bushes, until they found him carefully crouching in some

dense foliage. They gave him his street clothes, which he donned ; then, having been informed that the rumor about the militiamen was false, he permitted himself to be escorted to the train, which he had delayed for fifteen minutes. He then wisely "made friends with the engineer and the fireman, and they proceeded to hit it up lively for the Alabama line."

Unfortunately, the rumor proved to be only temporarily false. When the train reached Nashville, police came aboard and finally discovered Sullivan lying peacefully in bed, to all appearances fast asleep. "What's your name?" they inquired, after poking him in the ribs. "Thompson," John mumbled sleepily. "Well, I think it's Sullivan," one of the officers growled. "We've got a warrant for your arrest." Half a dozen revolvers flashed in "Thompson's" face, and he then quickly admitted that he really was Sullivan after all. He was immediately handcuffed, marched off the train, and jailed for the rest of the night in what he later referred to as a "rat-pen." Kilrain, too, was arrested, although as he later admitted the police took Sullivan first because they knew that the champion "always carried a roll of bills in his left hip pocket, and they figured that John L. could pay better than me." However, a kind-

hearted judge soon dismissed both the prisoners, and John at once proceeded to New York.

But his troubles had scarcely begun. The Governor of Mississippi requested Governor Hill of New York to grant extradition papers; and, after some delay, Hill did so. The lawyer whom Sullivan hired to defend him advanced the ingenious plea that his client had been compelled to fight in Mississippi for this reason: Kilrain's party had won the toss and had chosen Richburg as the battleground; Sullivan therefore was forced to accept and fight in Mississippi, or be branded a coward by the whole sporting world. But this argument was swept aside, and John was turned over to officers who were commanded to escort him back to Mississippi. He begged them not to force him to go, inasmuch as it was absolutely necessary for him to travel post-haste to Boston to see his mother "who was very sick and not expected to live"; but the hard-hearted officers merely laughed in his face and hustled him on a train bound for Jackson, Mississippi.

When he reached that place, a whooping crowd gave him a monster ovation at the station, and the county sheriff allowed him to register at the best hotel. A public reception committee came to welcome him there, and some of the most promi-

nent ladies of the city shook his hand so cordially that he thought they "would tear his arm from its socket." The climax came when a number of the best-known citizens went to the Governor and demanded that their distinguished guest should be given the freedom of the city. The righteous Governor, inexpressibly amazed and shocked by these obstreperous actions, ordered the sheriff to put Sullivan in jail at once. This was done; but, as John explained, "being a good fellow, he gave me free access to the jailyard, where I could walk around and smoke."

When John came to trial, he was quickly convicted of prize fighting. The decision was appealed, he was then freed on bail, and was forced to remain idle for nearly a year while the lawyers were preparing their counter arguments. When the long-drawn-out case was finally decided, Sullivan was turned free, after paying a fine which, together with the costs, amounted to over \$18,000. "On account of my being the victor, and having a reputation for 'throwing money away'," he said, "they made me settle up in good shape." What galled him more than the loss of the money, however, was the fact that Kilrain was convicted of "assault and battery" — an assertion which, as John contemptuously remarked, showed "their

ignorance and partiality in this affair." Jake was fined \$200 and sentenced to spend two months in jail. "I told the judge I didn't mind paying the fine, but I didn't like the jail sentence," Jake commented about forty years later. However, as he explained, he had a fairly good time after all, for in those days it was the custom to farm prisoners out. "My friends got busy and bought me for about thirty cents a day. It was easy then and I didn't mind, because while a prisoner I boxed in New Orleans for a side of \$1,500," chuckled old Jake, slapping his thigh in high glee.

II

When John was finally freed from the law's entanglements in the summer of 1890, he was still very unhappy. His legal worries had caused him to get badly out of condition, in mind as well as in body. Both his parents, too, died at about this time. Mrs. Sullivan died of rheumatism of the heart, while pneumonia killed Mike. John felt that incipient old age was slowly but surely creeping on him, and he often ruminated mournfully on the future. "Of course I'm the whole show to-day," he sighed, shaking his head lugubriously, "and it's 'Hail to the Chief' whenever I mosey out.

But say, if I ever hit the floor, the same crowd that now brings me wine would holler like hell, and next day I'd be driving a street car for my living."

Yet he continued to train, even though in a half-hearted manner, until finally a series of events occurred that brought the choleric old lion roaring from his retreat. For the pack outside was snarling and snapping: a host of young fighters, encouraged by the belief that Sullivan was rapidly deteriorating, began to hurl insolent challenges at him. John was finally roused from his sluggishness and gave convincing evidence, at least on paper, that he was the same valiant champion as of old. To all of his challengers he issued a lengthy defiance in March, 1892, in which, after stating that a theatrical contract had forced him to keep silent for some months, he expressed himself thus:


"This country has been overrun with a lot of foreign fighters and also American aspirants for fistic fame and championship honors, who have endeavored to seek notoriety and American dollars by challenging me to a fight, knowing full well that my hands were tied by contract and honor. I have been compelled to listen to their bluffs without making reply on account of my obligations.

But now my time has come. I hereby challenge any and all of the bluffers who have been trying to make capital at my expense to fight me either the last week in August this year or the first week in September this year at the Olympic Club, New Orleans, Louisiana, for a purse of \$25,000 and an outside bet of \$10,000, the winner of the fight to take the entire purse. I insist upon the bet of \$10,000 to show that they mean business. . . . First come, first served. I give precedence in this challenge to Frank P. Slavin, of Australia, he and his backers having done the greatest amount of bluffing. My second preference is the bombastic sprinter, Charles Mitchell, of England, whom I would rather whip than any man in the world. My third preference is James Corbett, of California, who has achieved his share of bombast. But in this challenge I include all fighters — first come, first served — who are white. I will not fight a negro. I never have and never shall. I prefer this challenge should be accepted by some of the foreigners who have been sprinting so hard after American dollars of late, as I would rather whip them than any of my own countrymen. The Marquis of Queensberry Rules must govern this contest, as I want fighting, not foot racing, and I intend to keep the championship of the world

where it belongs, in the land of the free and the home of the brave."

This announcement had a very salutary effect, for it sent all the mere rhetoricians scurrying back to their dens. But John's fondest wish was not gratified, for no foreigner accepted his terms. Only his third choice remained — James J. Corbett.

As a boy, Corbett, like all normal American youths, had been a vehement worshipper of Sullivan. At fifteen he had seen John slash an opponent to shreds in one of the notorious four-round bouts, and he had been present when John had won the championship from Paddy Ryan. Indeed, he and Sullivan had already "fought" in a ring. In 1890 they had exchanged gentle taps at an exhibition in which they appeared in evening dress; and, though it was only a friendly engagement, Corbett had obtained some knowledge of Sullivan's fighting methods which was to prove very useful. Shortly afterward, he had stolen some of Sullivan's thunder by offering a hundred dollars to any man who could withstand him for four rounds; and when John heard of this low trick, he was almost tempted to class Corbett with despicable foreigners. When he was told that Corbett had agreed to the formal terms of the



contract, John merely sneered: "——¹ Corbett! He can't punch a hole through a pound of butter. All the training I need is a haircut and a shave to knock his block off in one round."

John's training for this fight, in fact, consisted chiefly in boasting among his friends, in continuous drinking, and in the dictation of his autobiography. When he was requested to give a statement to the press concerning the nature and purpose of his forthcoming volume, he thoughtfully replied: "I am at work on a book which I hope will create a favorable impression on the literary world. It will contain nothing at which the youth of either sex will have occasion to blush, and can be placed on the family table beside the family Bible without fear."

It is true that Doctor Sargent, who gave John a painstaking examination during the summer of 1892, found that he was physically perfect, and that his only diseases were, or had been, boils, rheumatism, paralysis (threatened), and colds in the head and throat; nevertheless, the Doctor noted the ominous fact that his "respiratory apparatus is a trifle weak and the question of how to relieve breathlessness after vigorous exertion

¹ A type of masculine humor highly esteemed by the decadent Greeks, but most sternly frowned upon by contemporary moralists.

is a matter that may concern him in after years." John was so cheered by the results of this examination that he trained with even less care and energy than ever.

The little exercise that he actually took consisted chiefly of different sorts of public rows. He chanced one day to be in Philadelphia, in the vicinity of City Hall; and, as usual, an adoring gang of youngsters, aged from ten to eighty years, was following in his footsteps. A little policeman soon came bristling up and threatened to arrest Sullivan for unlawfully gathering a crowd in the street. It so happened that, on the previous day, John had had a highly indecent verbal combat with another Philadelphia policeman at a baseball game; and he had decided that it was "about time to show the Philadelphia police where they are at." So he picked up the diminutive officer and carried him for several blocks, despite his struggles, squirms, and screams, and then doused him up and down in a fountain, to the hysterical delight of the onlookers.

About a week before the fray he entered his pet New York hotel, and the admiring habitués noted with grievous concern that "his stomach looked large and flabby, and shook at the motion of the barber as he lathered John's face." One

of the mourners then tried to remonstrate with John by pointing out the error of his ways. This made him so exasperated that, utterly forgetting the proximity of the deadly razor, he bounded from his chair and almost wrecked the establishment in his frantic efforts to get at the would-be friendly adviser; but he was finally appeased when the frightened proprietor presented him with a silver horseshoe. Yet, to the great majority of Bostonian Irishmen, John was still the unbeaten and unbeatable champion of the world and in particular the champion of the Irish race. In fact, they hated Corbett with a particularly vicious hatred because he, an Irishman, was hoping to dethrone the greatest Irishman who ever lived.

III

The New England hierarchy suffered a severe and double disaster on September 7, 1892. On that day John Greenleaf Whittier died, and John Lawrence Sullivan was knocked out by Gentleman Jim Corbett of California. For not even the fact that the betting had been five to one on Sullivan — not even the fact that Boston backed him to the last man, and almost the last woman — not even the fact that John had spent the day before

the fight in getting drunk, while Corbett had passed the same day at the New Orleans Y. M. C. A. — saved him from defeat.

Hardly anybody, except a few foolish Westerners who supported Corbett, ever dreamed that this battle was to be John's last. When he clambered grandly into the ring, a demonstration broke loose that completely surpassed all previous public applause. Every one, from the lowest tout to the numerous priests and clergymen, disguised as laymen, joined in the deafening, universal chorus of clapping, stamping, and shrieking. In the riotous roar of insane plaudits, few noticed the trim, steely-muscled youth who slipped gracefully through the ropes to the opposite corner. To the audience, he was merely Victim Number Two Hundred-odd, destined to collapse, as all — or *almost* all — of his predecessors had collapsed, before the mighty "Human Pile-Driver" and "Human Hurricane of the Fistic Firmament." And then all thinking and all noise ceased — time was called.

Sullivan advanced, slapping his thigh with his left hand and glaring in his customary intimidating manner at his rival; then, suddenly, he received the greatest shock of his life. All other foes had instantaneously begun to wilt with fear when John



“JOHN L. SULLIVAN’S LAST RALLY.”

“He tries his rushing tactics on James J. Corbett without success. Scene in the Olympic Club, New Orleans, on the night of the memorable fight.”

National Police Gazette, New York. September 21, 1892.

had glowered at them in this frightful way; Corbett just laughed out loud. Then John ceased to beat a tattoo on his thigh, ceased to frown wickedly, and stood as though petrified with astonishment, with both hands dropping by his side, his jaw sagging, and a most incredulous look on his face. Amused at first, he was now equally amazed; his arrogant pride vanished and, stirred to a white heat of passion, he desperately tried to catch and smite that veritable Irish jig in flesh and blood who flitted like a butterfly before him.

For twenty rounds Corbett waltzed, two-stepped, and schottisched all over the ring, shaking a naughty finger in John's red face and grimacing like a monkey, while the crowd yelled again and again, "Is this a sprinting match? *Fight*, you coward!" His rival's maddening insolence made Sullivan speechless, and almost motionless, with angry mortification. He glared and foamed like a wild boar as he lumbered awkwardly after his opponent, but it was all to no avail; he simply could not catch or touch that skipping, fleeting, graceful phantom. Until the last round, John spoke but once. In the fourteenth round, Corbett, who was gradually beginning to come closer and to deal an occasional lightning stroke, struck John hard enough so that he blurted out, "That was

a good 'un, Jim." "Here's a better one," retorted Pompadour Jim, slapping his rival on the mouth.

In round twenty-one, for the first time, Corbett really began to hit. First, he struck Sullivan solidly on the jaw. John merely twisted his head, shook some blood out of his eyes and spat more out of his mouth, and snarled, "Come on!" Corbett gladly obeyed, smashing another terrific right-hand blow against the jaw. Then the champion of champions fell, "as falls an oak tree, slowly, majestically", as a contemporary journalistic artist phrased it; anyhow, he fell. Three times he rolled and twisted his mighty muscles in an attempt to rise, while blood streamed from his broken nose. Then, not really knocked out but so weak that he was absolutely unable to make his muscles respond automatically to his will, he pitched forward on his face and was counted out. Meanwhile a funereal silence settled on the numbed, inarticulate audience. Gallant Steve Brodie, who, in betting his last dollar on Sullivan, had taken a chance that was desperate even for him, was the only person who made the least move; he wobbled back and forth in his seat, a picture of apoplectic woe.

For days afterward, the pros and cons of this world-shaking catastrophe usurped the place of all

other news — who cared, for example, about the contest between Cleveland and Harrison, when John L. Sullivan had been defeated? While California appropriately celebrated the victory of her native son in the juice of her chief native product, Boston went into complete mourning. People walked about her streets with bowed heads and averted eyes — had not the fate of Babylon and Carthage overtaken her? Even the Bunker Hill Monument seemed to nod in grief, the Common appeared to be wreathed in a gloom that was not wholly fog, and the bells in Trinity and Old South tolled more mournfully than ever. But Boston, even while she suffered from her greatest affliction, did not forget to be literary; and everybody derived a few crumbs of comfort from this Lamentation of a modern Jeremiah:

The Champion's little nephew knelt
Beside his tiny bed;
Above him bent a burly form,
To hear a prayer he said:
"God bless papa and good mamma,
And all that hold me dear" —
Then sobbed "Oh, Nunkie, is it true
What people say down here?
That you're no longer champion,
You didn't win the fight?
I prayed so hard that you would win —

Maybe that wasn't right.
I'll say: 'Please, God, forgive me', first,
And then 'Bless Uncle John.'
I don't care what the people say,
You're still *my champion!*"


Only one thing happened to disturb the aftermath of the struggle. Corbett claimed that Sullivan had asked him to "throw" the fight, a charge that cured John completely of his battle scars, and goaded him into making some counter retorts. "I ain't looking for trouble," he grunted to a friendly gathering. "But it riles me when I think that, having worked eleven years to bring pugilism to the present high standard, such apes as these will thrust their greatness upon the public." Then, opening a locket on his watch chain, he continued: "See that locket? Well, it's got my mother's hair in it. I swear by that lock of hair that I was foully treated when I fought Corbett. He didn't lick me. No, never. I wasn't John L. that night. After the first two rounds I couldn't see Corbett. I didn't know where he was. I was in a trance. That leg [pointing to his left limb] ain't never been the same since I fought Corbett, and the other ain't no better neither. Corbett didn't knock me out. He just knocked me down and I couldn't get up,

'cause my legs couldn't hold up my body, 'cause they'd been doctored. I'm going into training so's I can lick the hell out of Corbett next time I meet him. I'll boil all the bad stuff out of my system, harden my muscles, and be as fit to fight as I ever was in my life."

But this was only a passing irritation. A few days later John had recovered his good humor, and remarked to the same friends, "Corbett licked me on the level. I was in good condition and the idea of my being drugged never entered my head." On the whole, in fact, John liked Corbett very well, and cherished the hope that the new champion might soundly trounce the two persons whom he hated more than anybody else alive: Charlie Mitchell and Peter Jackson. "If ever he's matched to fight 'em," said John, "you can say this for me, that I'll have a hand in training him and give him all the advice I can. Even if he *is* the only man that ever licked me, I like him. I sincerely hope he won't never lead the fast life I've led. If he behaves according to the rules of good behavior, and don't go raring around nights in all sorts of tough joints, he'll be champion as long as I was, if not longer."

Sullivan had lost more than the championship; he had lost all his money, for in addition to the

\$25,000 purse, his bet of \$10,000 was also gone. During the ten years of his supremacy, he had taken in — the figure is necessarily approximate — about \$500,000. But it had all disappeared, in both noble and unmentionable ways. He was almost penniless and, worse than that, his drawing power had now greatly diminished. It was no wonder that he felt very blue. "I've been a good fellow, and now I'm broke," he lamented. "Here I be, getting to the age when I'd ought to look out for the future, and I don't see no future to look to." Yet he had never been a gambler — his fortune had vanished in more pleasant channels. "John never threw away his money in gambling," said one of his trainers. "You would never see him in a gambling house and seldom at a race track. His money was all spent in drinking and on women; just as long as he stuck with his money, they stuck with him. When he lost his money, he lost them too." And John himself freely admitted the truth of all this. "I've always pelted money at the birdies," he sighed. He tried to comfort himself with the recollection that "a Christian Endeavorer once proved to me that, while he gave one tenth of all he earned for religion, it more than came back to him in many ways." But perhaps he had *not* given quite that much for religion; and anyhow,





“CHAMPION AND EX-CHAMPION CHEERED.”

“John L. Sullivan given a rousing testimonial by over ten thousand enthusiastic admirers, in Madison Square Garden, New York, on September 17.”

National Police Gazette, New York, Oct. 18, 1892.

he was not at all certain that he would make much of a success as a Christian Endeavorer. At all events, he was not the only American who was destined soon to feel the sting of poverty, for his terrible downfall was, as he noted, the forerunner of a very disastrous financial catastrophe. "After I'd lost the championship and hadn't so much of the long green to circulate, the panic of 1893 set in."

In order to soothe his sorely wounded spirit, a benefit was given for the fallen hero in Madison Square Garden one week after his defeat. When he and Corbett were introduced to the audience, they shook hands in a solemn but friendly manner. Sullivan then read a speech, composed for the occasion by one of his intellectual friends, in which this sentiment was expressed: "Since I had to be defeated, I am glad to have suffered defeat at the hands of an American." Theodore Roosevelt later paid a high compliment to John for the staunch Americanism manifested in this heroic remark.

CHAPTER FIVE : THUMPING THE BOARDS

I

WITH a wisdom greater than that shown by some of his successors, Sullivan took his defeat sensibly and made no attempt to come back. Only once again did he appear in a ring as a fighter. In 1896 he and Tom Sharkey boxed several exhibition rounds for reasons purely sentimental and financial. At the end, in his habitual speech, John said, "I've had my day and am now almost too fat to box."

Nevertheless, there still were plenty of opportunities open to him. It is, indeed, a sweetly solemn thought that our ex-pugilists have, all things considered, many more social and financial opportunities than our ex-Presidents. John was soon overwhelmed with all sorts of offers. As he listened to the blandishments of his friends, or puckered his shaggy brows over the thousands of flattering letters that choked his mail box, he was half persuaded to believe that most of the busi-

ness men in the country — from bankers and railroad presidents to saloon keepers and managers of bordellos — would go into abject bankruptcy unless he agreed to accept their offers of partnerships.

But the lure of the crowd finally settled the matter. The applause of millions was still ringing in his ears, but he was not yet satisfied. The stage . . . yes, surely that was the thing most likely to satisfy him. In fact, he had already tasted its joys. Some years before, he had traveled for a time with a circus; later, he had joined a minstrel show, in which his statuesque form had represented various ancient and modern gladiators. For this easy work he had been paid \$500 a week — more money than was now being promised him by any of the numerous persons who were almost tearfully soliciting his services as a partner. The stage, also, had rewarded him in other ways. Once, while he was posing in a Boston theatre, his friends had arranged a pleasant surprise for him. At the end of his act, a committee walked out on the stage, bearing a most unusual gift. They presented him with a statue of himself in his most formidable fighting pose — an exact reproduction of himself in height and size, and constructed (this was the marvelous feature)

out of fourteen thousand carnations, white ones representing his body, and red ones simulating his diamond belt.

When John made the great decision, the theatrical world was all agog with delight. Great American actors were all too rare, it was felt, but the addition of Sullivan to the profession heralded a restoration of the best traditions of the classic stage. Producers and playwrights tumbled over each other, in their haste to be the first to woo him. Dramas, written in feverish haste, came to him by the score; and, after a great deal of consultation and advice, he at first decided upon one which seemed to offer every possible inducement for his peculiar tastes.

Its plot, a most fearful and wonderful thing, ran thus. Act I. John, the hero, was to come in a balloon to the timely rescue of the heroine from a band of "bad Willies." Act II. John was to be hilariously but harmlessly blown up by a gang of bloodthirsty, red-coated anarchists. Act III. This was to be rather tame, as it was rightly believed that, by this time, the audience would need relaxation; therefore, John was merely required to fight a ten-round bout with a mildly disposed villain who held a mortgage on "the old home farm" of the heroine. Act IV. Action

returned with a bang, for John was to engage in a ferocious pistol battle with the promoters of the mortgage scheme. Act V. The play was to end happily when John, after leaping over a precipice into a concealed tank of real water, "pulled off a happy reunion with the heroine and her long-lost brother."

Sullivan was so intrigued by the measureless possibilities of this plot that he decided to accept it, when he suddenly recollected an experience he had had with the circus. He had been billed to go up in a balloon at a county fair held in a Western town. As a preparation for his ascent, he had been "trundled to the fair grounds in a coach drawn by four white horses", preceded by a gorgeous brass band. When the balloon pilot shouted that all was ready, John climbed into the cage; but no allowance had been made for his weight — for at this time he was out of training and very fat. The result was that the balloon, after rising a scant ten feet, became partially crippled, dropped back, and began to whiz along on a horizontal course so close to the ground that Sullivan was mercilessly bumped up and down. While the crowd of farmers fled in shrieking dismay, the basket that held John went crashing against the fleeing multitudes, knocking scores of people right

and left. Then the runaway monster slapped poor John through a row of tents, and at last ended its murderous journey by hurling him against a fence. The hanger, having turned completely over, spilled him out on the ground, and the gay balloon then shot toward the zenith. The memory of this nerve-shaking experience caused John to abandon all idea of appearing in a play which necessitated the use of another balloon; and besides, the plot offered some rather difficult problems from the standpoint of stage presentation. Thus a play, which might have been the long-anticipated Great American Drama, was ruthlessly nipped in the bud.

For a time, John felt very unhappy. What a pity it was, he remarked in aggrieved tones, that "such a rip-snorter of a show was all spoilt by one stunt that no wise gent like I am would dare to pull off." His sorrow was soon alleviated, however, by the memory of a gorgeous spectacle called "Honest Hearts and Willing Hands", in which he had once appeared during his championship days. Its plot, to be sure, had differed but little from the one he now felt compelled to sacrifice, save for the absence of any bumptious balloon. In one particular, indeed, it surpassed its defunct rival, for it ended with a monologue — to be


spoken by Sullivan — that offered him every opportunity to display those oratorical flights of which he was so pardonably proud. After striding majestically to the front of the stage, he was to raise his right hand aloft and, with the utmost solemnity, pronounce these affecting lines :

There is no time, no place, no power,
No land serene, no roseate bower,
No heaven, no sainted place of bliss,
Nor baby's cheek, nor baby's kiss,
That's grander, sweeter, purer than
A woman's love for thoughtless man.

No audience, it was believed, could resist the emotional appeal of such a powerful climax, and so it turned out. In August, 1890, John had signed a contract which claimed his services as the hero of "Honest Hands and Willing Hearts" for two continuous years, including a trip to Australia. For nearly a year, he had appeared in almost all the principal American cities, on a tour that "went clear through to San Francisco", as he proudly boasted.

The American tour had been so successful that, in June, 1891, Sullivan and his company had sailed for Australia. On the way they stopped at the Samoan Islands; and, after seeing the renowned

pugilist perform his marvelous histrionic exploits, the natives gave vent to their awestruck delight in a mixture of clucks and contortions which, being interpreted, meant "Great Chief." But Australia itself proved to be very disappointing. Appreciation of the drama was very weak — it was even suggested that Sullivan might appear to better advantage in the ring than on the stage — and the audiences were so small that the company ran into debt. "I got an awful deal all over Australia, and I never saw such a mean lot of bums in my life," was John's caustic summary of his experiences there. After six weeks, he began to feel homesick; for his work was arduous, Australians of both sexes were curiously cold, and he therefore had little opportunity to amuse himself after his customary fashion. "I didn't give myself up to much pleasure in Australia," he admitted after he had landed in San Francisco in October, 1891. Nor was he made any happier when rumor insisted that the ship's captain had been compelled to confine him in irons during most of the return voyage because, freed from his stage duties, he had broken all bounds and had almost swamped the ship by tearing around in an ecstasy of abandoned intoxication. Though he denied this accusation with violent rage, it still refused to be



quieted; and he accordingly tried to conceal his chagrin by "growing whiskers all over his face."

So it came about that John, recalling the American success of this play and failing to discover a worthy successor, resumed it early in 1893, and for some months to come repeated and even bettered his former triumphs. Wherever he appeared, he was universally acclaimed. Hundreds of audiences were alternately thrilled and moved to copious tears as heroic John, evening after evening, put hydra-headed vice to a most ignominious rout, and gloriously saved despairing and much-wilted virtue. He was, so some hundreds of thousands of idol-worshippers maintained, a theatrical star of the first magnitude. He stirred up bitter jealousy in the breasts of other stars, one of whom cruelly commented. "*Him* an actor? He acts about as well as he says that Charlie Mitchell fights." The great Modjeska, however, came gallantly to his defence. After witnessing his exhibition in Cincinnati, she expressed her delight in these words: "Oh, I like him very well, indeed. He speaks his lines naturally, and one likes that bluff, hearty manner." Finally, after a tour that was even more gratifying than the first had been, it was decided that John must be cast for a new part, since, admittedly great though it was,

"Honest Hands and Willing Hearts" could hardly be expected to draw crowds forever.

A worthy successor was at length discovered in "A True American", which was succinctly described by a glowing critic as a superb example of a play that "expresses a fine contempt for everything that is low and mean." The plot more than substantiated the critic's praise. The chief villain was an Englishman who perpetually pursued a perpetually fleeing American heroine. At the end she was miraculously rescued by John, who, cast in the part of an intensely Irish-American hero, saved her from the vile machinations of a horde of English rogues after five acts of heart-breaking, tremendously tense action. John was, we are told, "subtly humorous, courtly, tender, romantic, terrible, impressive and always amusing." The play's emotional tone is indicated by two lines which constituted almost the whole of John's repertoire: "I am a true American" and "I will fly to your assistance." But these lines gave John an opportunity to show his real magnitude as an actor; for, in repeating the phrases in scores of different situations, he employed such an infinite variety of tonal effects and delicately shaded nuances that the same critic went into wild raptures over John's magnificent rendition of his part.

■

Yet, despite his surpassing art in this play, it lasted but a few months. Its temporary successor was "The Man from Boston", which was deliberately chosen because it made capital out of Sullivan alone. The result was that it soon met with the fate that justly overtakes all plays which extol the hero to the utter neglect of the heroine and the villain. Sullivan's sorrow at its failure was twofold; for at this time — 1895 — his spendthrift habits had brought him so close to poverty that he was unable to pay a bill which was charged for printing the play. The publishers finally got a judgment against him; but, in spite of all the efforts made to collect the money, none was forthcoming.

All this litigation, however, soon killed the already dying play; and John, wretched and almost penniless, tried to drown his sorrows in sentimentality and drink. Just at this time, it happened that one of his theatrical friends died, and Sullivan, together with a number of friends, attended the funeral. The dead actor had requested that some one should sing "My Old Kentucky Home", and before the song was finished, everybody present had broken completely down — everybody, that is, except John, who sat staring blankly at the ceiling without a tear in his eye.

But it happened that the minister, during the course of his comforting remarks, used the phrase, "Now I lay me down to sleep", upon which John collapsed. After the services were over, a maudlin discussion arose concerning the most touching expression that the preacher had used, and, since nobody agreed, John finally settled the argument in summary fashion. "You fellows are all wrong," he said, in a tone that wavered between bluster and tears. "The prettiest thing was when the preacher said, 'Now I lay me down to sleep'" — and he sagged to the floor, his great frame shaking with uncontrollable anguish.

But his weakness was short-lived. His companions, driven almost out of their wits by John's unprecedented behavior, decided that the only way to restore him to normalcy was to hurry him to his beloved barber shop. This was at once done; and, while Sullivan lolled back in his chair and allowed his barber to wash his tear-grimed face clean for shaving, a theatrical agent, who had been primed by John's friends, rushed up and suggested that he should sign a contract to go to London for a stage engagement with Charlie Mitchell.

In a second tender-hearted John became a boiling geyser of fury. Leaping from the chair, he


screamed, in a tone as high as his ponderous bass voice would permit, "Blast Mitchell! Before I'd go over to show myself with that damned Englishman, I'd . . ." Here all distinct articulation ceased, while his whole body quivered with rage. Then, still speechless, he sank back into the chair, though volcanic fires yet glimmered in his eyes. "Well, if you won't go, you're a bigger damned fool . . ." — but the agent never finished the sentence, for John made such a quick motion that his persecutor bounded out of the door. John tried to struggle up from his chair to go in pursuit; but the barber flashed a razor back and forth in front of his face so that he dared not rise.

II

During the next three years, Sullivan acted whenever he could, and in whatever capacity he could. His repertoire, however, was so limited that his services were rarely needed, and so he sank more deeply into poverty and drunkenness. But when the *Maine* was blown up in February, 1898, he forgot all his troubles in a great outburst of patriotic ardor. Spain, he firmly believed, was utterly despicable. "Spain! Who in hell is she and what's she done to make her think she's

got a chance against us?" he shouted one day at a cheering audience. "If she wants to fight us, let her go and get a reputation first, just like I done before I was champion." He urged all his friends to enlist when war at last came; he offered his time, his reputation, and his money to the government in case of need — in fact, he did everything except try to enlist himself. In a long letter to the *New York World*, he expressed himself at length concerning the proper course for the government to follow. The disaster to the *Maine*, he repeated over and over, had moved him to tears. "Yes, Mr. Editor, and friends, I, John L. Sullivan, wept as though my heart would break. . . . Blow every Spaniard to hell! . . . My old-time fighting blood is up. . . . Can we do it? Yes, we can lick Spain in fifteen minutes. . . . If I was President of this great and glorious United States, I'd have settled this matter long ago. The pugilists to-day fight their battles in the papers and over the telephones — I guess McKinley has learned the same methods. If I could only lick Spain myself, I'd be so happy I'd lay down and die." After this letter appeared, consternation reigned at Washington until war was finally declared.

John was overjoyed when McKinley and his Cabinet, after long delay, did their manifest duty.



During the course of the conflict, he continued to give valuable advice to both the military and naval authorities. Then, when the victory was won, he felicitated the Republican party in glowing language; but he also pointed out the many grave mistakes that it had made, both in Cuba and in the Philippines, in such scathing language that a deep gloom settled upon Washington — a gloom that was not dispelled until after the election of 1900. When some of John's acquaintances suggested, in a mild sort of way, that he had not done much that was definitely concrete to help win the war, he flamed out: "*Done* much? Ain't I talked? Ain't I told them Washington guys what to do, and ain't they been skedaddling around doing it? Ain't I been giving exhibition bouts, and refereeing patriotic boxing matches? Ain't I saved about a thousand carloads of people from going loony from thinking too much about the war? And besides, ain't I been sick?"

He had, in fact, done — or been — all these things. In Oregon, during the winter of 1899, some church members who were moved by the loftiest motives had sworn out a warrant for Sullivan's arrest, because — so it was charged — he had appeared in a patriotic boxing contest on the Sabbath day. They believed in patriotism, to be

sure, but not in unholy patriotism. John luckily heard of their sanctimonious snooping before the evening's festivities had commenced; and, stealing quietly out of the stage entrance, he went to a train which was scheduled to leave at 11 P.M. Climbing into the engine, he donned the engineer's clothes and calmly awaited pursuit. When officers came sneaking up with a warrant, they entirely overlooked a grimy figure seated at the throttle, and hunted for their prey elsewhere in vain.

On the following night, while the train was fighting its way eastward through a howling blizzard, it finally became stalled near a small prairie town. After a long delay, the women passengers got much alarmed, and a fellow, described by John as a "bloke with a shawl over his shoulders", frightened the ladies still more by parading up and down the cars, screeching out, "We're lost! We're lost!" "See here, you sheep," snarled John, jamming him into a seat and flourishing a quivering fist before his eyes, "two more yips from you and you'll get lost sure, for I'll dump you out in the snow and you won't come back neither!" It was not long before Sullivan's courageous deed was known, and the inhabitants of the little town appropriately changed its "Main Street" to "Sullivan Thoroughfare."

In Boston, also, John had acted as a referee of boxing contests, which were held for the purpose of raising money to fight the Spaniards. These patriotic frays were held mostly in the Boston Music Hall, where statues of Beethoven and Wagner looked down upon the fistic encounters. Amid these classic scenes, John served his country faithfully and frequently. In the summer of 1899, another attack of a strangely complex disease had confined him to his bed for several months. This time it went by the name of dropsy. He was swollen to an unbelievable size, was almost blind for a time, and all his friends cheerfully assured him that he was probably going to die. "Well, I can't help it, can I?" he would ejaculate. "I guess it'll land me this time; but — hell! A short life and a merry one's been my motto."

Little by little he recovered, however, and occupied his time during his convalescence by poking fun at the lugubrious persons who had prophesied his decease. Once again, in 1900, the lure of the stage won him. For a time he acted as the tender-hearted but valiant hero of "The Two Orphans", but it soon came to an ignominious end. John then reached the long-delayed but final conclusion that he "wasn't no good no more for the hero stuff." For, in spite of all the praise that had

been poured on him, he had at last discovered that, as a hero on the boards, he could not register the proper emotion when the heroine told him that she could, or could not, be his. He was told by competent critics that the most artistic way to perform in such scenes was to clap his hands over his eyes and take three steps backward, as if stunned; but, despite this excellent advice, he persisted in looking around as if for some ropes to cling to, and for a man with a pail, a bottle, and a sponge.

Having finished with the hero business, he formed a company under his own management which presented "Uncle Tom's Cabin." John acted the part of Simon Legree — a rôle which suited him so perfectly that for a time the play was fully as successful as "Honest Hands and Willing Hearts" had been. That John was his own best critic is sufficiently proved by his succinct summary of his performance: "In 1900 I was starring with some bloodhounds in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Me and the dogs give hundreds of audiences their money's worth of noise." One incident of his tour made him rightfully indignant. A story was circulated that some Canadian reporters had asked him whether he thought that the "story of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' had really brought on the war"; and Sullivan, so the tale went, had

replied, "You can search me, but we certainly did give them Spaniards a run." Then John burst out in an unusually aggrieved speech. "Why," he said, "I've took a lot of joking from the reporters in the American papers because most of 'em is my friends, but when them Canucks get gay, and try to slip across some of their foreign humor at me — well, I'm there with the short-arm poke." Nevertheless, the Canadians continued to have a good time at his expense, and his Canadian tour was soon brought to a disastrous end by other unkind stories that were circulated everywhere. The negro who played the part of Uncle Tom — according to these vile slanders — always turned white with fear when Legree caught him. It was also affirmed that the show was running on the rocks, for the most telling scene in it had been ruined: Eliza could not make her thrilling escape across the icy river, because John used all the ice to make highballs for himself.

Back in the United States, however, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" went gaily along until February, 1902, when it came to a complete and inglorious end at Paterson, New Jersey. There had been rumblings of discontent among some members of the company for some time. Sullivan, it later appeared, used the blacksnake whip so hard that

the negro actors rebelled. "Massa John, you is too pow'ful," Uncle Tom muttered in a rebellious stage whisper during one performance. At this the gallery screeched with delight, and John, quick to take advantage of the opportunity, laid the whip on harder than ever. After the performance was over, John tried to comfort Uncle Tom and the other malcontents by the consoling remark, "The nearer you get to the real thing in acting, the more of an artist you are"; but, somehow or other, they failed to see the point. The end soon came. At five o'clock on one very cold morning Sullivan came rolling into a Paterson hotel, approached the bartender, and wept abundantly as he hiccupped his awful tale. "We're all starving. I've been setting up all night keeping little Eva from eating the bloodhounds, and Topsy's in with the other donkeys eating hay. Me and Uncle Tom's been spitting cotton for six hours, and I'm afraid Eliza'll bust up the show by eating all the ice I ain't used up. And here I be, with a big, long thirst, the only thing I've got left to my name. If something don't turn up pretty soon, I'm going to elope with Aunt Ophelia."

The failure of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" caused John to do some serious thinking. Was there not, he wondered, some sort of medicinal treatment that

would help him to overcome his ruinous love for whisky? Of course — there were the baths at Hot Springs, Arkansas. So he packed up and went there for a stay; but, for some reason, the baths did not seem to help him much. On the second day after his arrival, almost delirious on account of his unparalleled twenty-four hour abstinence from liquor, he bawled to an attendant: "Send me up some drinks every twenty minutes. When I want something to eat, I'll kick a hole in the wall. If I don't do that, don't you send up no food on your life!"

Thus he had proved to his own satisfaction that he could not cure his thirst — but neither could he remain idle. He ruminated long and profoundly, and finally reached a decision that showed what a keen philosopher his stage experiences had made him. "Me for melodrama this time," he decided. "The public wants thrills and tears and abused heroines. Of course my part of Simon Legree was all right, but I'd rather have a part where I can walk right in and twist the hero by the neck, crop and gizzard, while the gallery goes clean off its dip. I'll have a show that'll make this guy Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' look like a back number."

But his plans to rejuvenate the stage failed to

materialize; he therefore abandoned philosophy and went into vaudeville. For he was firmly convinced that variety shows would furnish him still further opportunities to improve the morals of his audiences. When he was asked, "Is it true, Mr. Sullivan, that you are going to abandon the legitimate drama in order to go into vaudeville?" he grunted, "Sure, I'm going into vaudyville, and it's going to be moral enough, too, if that's what you mean by legitimate. I don't believe in none of your trash that ain't good for both young and old folks. My act's going to do good; it ain't going to be none of your shirt-tail dances. I'm going to elevate the stage with a moneylog, and don't you forget it. Vaudyville! — yah!" And he looked a picture of ineffable disgust.

His act more than lived up to his promise. He told a few stories that were furnished to him by a friend who had dug them out of some ancient almanacs, and then gave a short talk on boxing, in which he explained and illustrated some of the most powerful blows of offense and tricks of defense. This routine was never varied in the least particular — except when his condition forced a sudden change of plans. After he had failed to appear or had utterly ruined his part on account of drunkenness, he would ardently sign the pledge,

and then proceed to break it even more ardently.

Again and again this was repeated.

One evening, he came swaggering out, rolling and spouting like a whale in a heavy sea, and began his speech backwards. When everybody roared with delight, John quickly lost his temper. "Say, you mugs make me tired!" he snorted. "Think I'm working? Well, I'm doing this just for fun. *Me* work?" And he pulled a roll of bills from his hip pocket and flourished it at the crowd. Then the curtain was quickly ordered down, but John tried to lurch around its edge, in order to hurl other taunts at the audience. Down came another curtain — and then another — but he crawled under them all and rose unsteadily to his feet. "Hey, there, pals, I'm with you still!" he chuckled, in a much better mood now that he had bested the stage hands. "I'll show you a jig step or two," and he did. At length, after a great deal of trouble, he was pulled into unwilling retirement.

Such scenes as this could not be permitted to go on long, even in burlesque. The end eventually came at Taunton, Massachusetts, where he fell while drunk through a plate glass window two stories up. Instead of being decently killed, he was

merely a bit shaken and went at once to his theatre, where the manager berated him for his disreputable appearance. Too drunk to strike the fellow, John tried to kick him *in posteriori*, whereat the diplomatic manager employed the simple but wholly effective device of making off. Sullivan's kick therefore landed on thin air, and he wrenched his leg so badly that he was unable to appear at the ensuing performance. He then decided, once and for all, that the theatre was not quite suited to the range of his capabilities.

CHAPTER SIX: LICKING JOHN BARLEY-CORN

I

AFTER he had definitely abandoned the stage, however, Sullivan did not despair of finding some pleasant and highly remunerative way to make an easy living. For some years, indeed, he had been casting longing eyes toward those very alluring and all-powerful American twin professions: politics and the saloon.

As early as 1895, an agitation had arisen in Massachusetts concerning the wisdom of running Sullivan for the National House of Representatives. John's friends whooped for him everywhere for a while, but political sagacity prevailed in the end, for it was decided that John ought to have some political experience before he attempted to capture a seat in Congress; and for a time his hopes of political glory went glimmering, since Massachusetts politicians seemed rather cold about coming to his aid. In 1899, while he was living for a time in New York City, his most recent acquaintances decided to give New England a well-

merited rebuke by sending John to the New York Assembly; for Massachusetts, so all loyal New Yorkers fervently believed, had never rewarded her greatest son in a manner that befitted his eminence. True enough, John had been a resident of New York for only a very short time, but such an unimportant consideration as that did not worry urban politicians at all — they could circumvent that slight obstacle just as easily as they habitually overcame other difficulties of a technically legal nature. So it happened that, when Sullivan opened what was politely called a “tea room” on Sixth Avenue, in August, 1899, he gave a “Green Tea at High Noon” for the Tammany men through whose aid he hoped to become an Assemblyman, or, at the very worst, an Alderman. The gala event had been announced some weeks earlier, and was therefore eagerly anticipated. Nor did John disappoint his patrons. Dressed in what was described as a “loose blouse, cut low”, and wearing a huge emerald on his expansive shirt-bosom, he presided with grave dignity while his guests were served. The menu was appropriate — perhaps a little more than appropriate:

First round. Green turtle soup.

Second round. Pig’s feet, with shamrock dressing.

Third round. Ribs of beef (upper cut), and Irish potatoes.

Fourth round. Punch (in mug).

Fifth round. Lettuce salad.

Sixth round. Green-gage plums and gooseberries.

Seventh round. Pistachio ice cream, green coffee, and crème-de-menthe.

While food was served, an orchestra, hidden behind a green bower, alternately played "Where the River Shannon Flows", "The Wearing of the Green", and other Irish melodies. At the end John made a speech which doubtless deserved to be ranked with the lost Orations of Demosthenes. But all that was recorded for posterity consisted of a few words at the end, when John declared that he had been "deeply touched", but he didn't say how much.

Nevertheless, he failed to become even an Alderman. The tea room, strange to say, did not prosper, and within a year Sullivan wisely decided that he would resume his citizenship in Boston. Before he departed from New York, he felt constrained to express his opinion of Tammany and its followers. He began by grudgingly admitting that some of them were undeniably "big toads in the political puddle", but he followed with some rather caustic

criticism. "They're all right, but their heads is so swelled that they think everybody's waiting to jump through the hoop, roll over, or play dead, when Tammany gives the word. I told 'em they was on the wrong trolley, but it 'ud take a faster talker than me to stuff anything like that down their gullets. They follow Croker the same as they follow any other leader, but they'd cheerfully chip in for 'Gates Ajar' and 'At Rest' floral pieces to-morrow for his political funeral. Bourke Cockran's about as much alive as some of them Egyptian mummies that had wakes held over 'em before the timbers was sawed off for Noah's ark. All Tammany men has some nice things to say about McKinley and Roosevelt, but they always mix in some swear words saying it."

A second attempt was soon made to run Sullivan for Congress from Massachusetts; but he himself, after a lengthy deliberation over the matter, summarily squelched his friends' plans with these words:

"Why should I go to Congress? If I did go, I'd build up the navy, I'd raise a big army, I'd build a whopping merchant marine, and I'd be honest. But what good would it all do? There's some three hundred and ninety Congressmen and about ninety Senators. The public knows only about

twenty Senators and about thirty Congressmen; the rest ain't even as well knowed as the Mayor of Paducah, wherever that is. If I went to Congress, I wouldn't be a reformer — there's too damned many of them idiots already and they never get nowhere, except to kick up a bunch of rows."

John's friends had now almost given up hope of starting him on a political career; but when they suggested that he might win new glories by becoming Mayor of Boston, he became really enthusiastic. He labored diligently to form a platform that would make Boston what she had long desired to be — a model city; and, after his deliberations had borne fruit, he broke into print with this pronouncement:

"There's a lot of things in Boston that need fixing, and it'll take a strong man like me to do it. They've had grandstand players, four-flushers, sea lawyers, hot-air commission merchants, and pikers for Mayors of Boston. About all they've pulled off was . . . to work the city. . . . When I get the key of the Mayor's office on my key-ring, I'll put the Indian sign on the professional fixers, and keep busy canning the hand-shakers who think they've been elected for life to get the high figures on the payroll. I'll give the ordinary boys a chance to get after the

easy money. . . . So here is where I declare myself out for the nomination. I'll take care of the election. I'll guarantee there won't be any more rough-houses in the Common Council and the Aldermen will walk the chalk line, or it'll be safer for them to get no nearer the City Hall than Revere Beach. . . . Baseball bats will be barred from the caucus, but the work in the Mayor's office will be hard enough to suit anybody. It will be a finish fight to put Boston in the championship class, and they'll come from all over to see a town run right. It's the Democratic nomination I want, for I'm a Democrat even though I do believe in Roosevelt. But I don't object to the Republicans making it unanimous, just to save hammer throwing."

This all-inclusive platform at first brought much joy to John's backers. Then a terrible doubt arose: it was feared that both its ideas and the language in which they were expressed might prove too difficult to be understood by the Bostonian masses. John was therefore asked to state, as briefly as possible, the leading planks in his platform in such simple language that even the most indigenous Bostonian could comprehend them. He soon obliged his followers with this terse dictum: "On the level; home rule; no hayseed

interference, and a fair shake for everybody." This, so every one felt, was more than merely satisfactory — it was magnificent, and its author was hailed by his admirers as "our next Mayor." John was doing a vaudeville act in Boston at the time, and it is to be suspected that the ubiquitous press agent was instrumental in keeping John's alleged mayoralty aspirations alive. With the close of his engagement the publicity in his behalf gradually ceased. But before his departure from the city he was interviewed in his dressing-room by a cub reporter who addressed him thus: "John, I've heard that you intend to run for Mayor but I should like to hear more about the planks in your platform. Tell me, John, won't you?" — and here he buttonholed Sullivan — "just what you would really give Boston if you become Mayor." John replied in merry jest, with words that were never printed: "Free rum and licensed ——"¹

II

Sullivan's reference to rum in his political credo was doubtless genuine and personal. Steadily, as the years had passed, he had guzzled

¹ A type of intimately domestic architecture, frequently and fearlessly mentioned by the flower of the Elizabethans.

more deeply, more frequently, and more enthusiastically; and, as his visions of theatrical and political greatness faded, he gravitated more and more naturally toward saloon keeping. In the intervals between his other activities, in fact, he had already ventured briefly into the saloon business; for he had decided that it was certainly most foolish of him to pay out such enormous sums for liquor without making some money in the same way as he was squandering it. Why not kill two birds with one stone: sell liquor, and keep prosperously drunk on the proceeds? Such was the pleasant vision that beckoned, and he had followed the gleam.

Even in his fighting days, John had owned part interest in several saloons; but, generous and easily deceived as he was, he had eventually discovered he was paying far more dividends — in the shape of the drinks he purchased — than he was receiving. Around 1895, he formed a saloon partnership in Boston with Mike Clarke. For a time all went well; then Clarke discovered that despite the patronage the business did not prosper. John's generosity and thirst led to a dissolution of partnership.

When Mike (who had once been an actor) was later asked to describe what had happened, he

looked rather sheepish, and vaguely replied, in his most sepulchral tone, "Let us draw a veil over what occurred." Certain eyewitnesses, however, were more loquacious, and from them we learn that a pitched battle took place, in which poor Clarke was inevitably defeated. Within twenty-four hours, the gaudy sign "Sullivan & Clarke" was mere kindling wood, and John was looking for another partner.

He had, of course, but little difficulty in persuading several other victims to join with him; but, in fairly rapid succession, they all became as thoroughly disillusioned as Clarke. Besides, Sullivan had now become a relentless and ruinous toper. By 1900, or perhaps a little later — for accurate statistics concerning saloon keepers are exceedingly hard to find — John had learned that, though his friends were still legion, they all fled the moment he touched upon the subject of partnership in any business whatever.

Meanwhile his funds were very low, and he was becoming more and more irritable. One day, so the story goes, he called upon a friend who had collected a marvelous menagerie of wild animals. The friend was slow in appearing, and John, in spite of the fact that he had just gulped down a pint of whisky, found that the time dragged most

wearily. Suddenly his glance fell upon a wildcat that seemed to eye him almost as contemptuously as Charlie Mitchell had done. Stung to uncontrollable fury by that bitter memory, John leaped toward the cage, opened the door, seized the beast by the tail, yanked it out, and growled, "Come on, Charlie, you coward — London Rules and no holds barred!" "Charlie" responded with a will; but in less than a minute John's iron fingers had closed around its throat and choked its life out.

On another occasion when he was, as he afterward moaned, "slopped to the ears", he essayed to criticize the fine art of painting. In 1900 an artist, known to fame as the manufacturer of a portrait of Dante's "Inferno" that hung on the wall of a New York saloon, had painted a picture of John, who agreed to pay \$135 for it. But when it was finished, Sullivan swore that it did not look the least bit like him, absolutely refused to pay for it, and was therefore sued by the artist for damages. When the case came up for trial, Sullivan was called to testify, and in the course of his alcoholic remarks he spoke thus: "Say, I could paint a better picture of myself with my feet than that fellow done with his hands. I'm the one who had ought to have the damages. He put me in a dress suit with a diamond as big as a cobblestone in my shirt-

front. Did you" [and he looked appealingly at the judge] "ever see a real gent dressed like that? And the hands — say, look at my hands. Do them hands look like a lady's paws, or" [holding up his enormous fists] "like hams? Do *them* hands in the picture look as if they'd ever knocked out four men in one night? They look as if they belonged to a dude. The whole thing makes me tired; it's plain rotten, that's what it is. Imagine a duck painting me in a dress suit about to enter the ring, with a diamond as big as a headlight — and them awful hands! Say, that picture looks a hell of a ——" At this point, the judge ordered him to be silent, but the decision was in his favor.

But even exploits such as these gave him little lasting satisfaction, for he was not merely penniless — he was getting deeper and deeper into debt. A monster benefit, staged for him at about this time in Boston, had been but a temporary boon, for within a few weeks all its proceeds had disappeared down his insatiable throat. In November, 1902, he was finally compelled to file a petition of bankruptcy. His liabilities, which consisted chiefly of unsecured promissory notes for an extraordinary variety of liquors, were stated to be \$2,658, while his assets, mostly clothes, were sixty dollars. All his creditors chased him for several months, in

the vain hope that they might retrieve something ; but by February, 1903, even the most optimistic ones had succumbed to the inevitable, and the case was therefore discharged. When the court rendered this welcome decision, John gave the judge a speech of thanks which closed, as all of his formal addresses invariably did, with the valedictory, "I thank you one and all very kindly. Yours truly, John L. Sullivan."

All public officials, however, were not so kind. Toward the end of 1902, he wobbled up the steps of the New York City Hall, and informed the officer at the door that he wanted to see his "personal friend and kind companion", the Mayor. The lordly sergeant, failing to recognize the distinguished caller, disdained even to reply to him and calmly blocked the entrance. Then red-eyed John became even redder-eyed, and blazed out, "What'r y' standing there for? Get out of the way! I want to see the Mayor P. D. Q." Viewing him with supreme contempt, the impassive official sneered, "You can't see him! Go home!" Sullivan then tried to lurch past his opponent, but he was immediately pushed away and backward so that he bumped and rolled down the steps. Then, partially sobered by his thumping descent, he rose painfully and, balancing himself unsteadily

and blinking solemnly up at the triumphant sergeant, he forced out the hoarse query, "Say, is they a pinch coming to me for this?" "No, not if you go away," replied the officer, whose victory had made him generous. So John staggered off, sadly muddled in mind and bruised in body, but rejoicing at his narrow escape.

In Boston, a little later, he was charged with pounding a horse with his fists and kicking it three times in the under ribs. So he was haled to court, where two policemen testified that they had seen him do this dreadful deed. "Now, look here," John complained to the judge, "do you really think I'd do a thing like that in my own home town, where my friends could see me? I've got too much respect for Boston and her residents, horses and all, to rare around that way. Besides, judge, that balky nag had runned away with me and throwed me out, and if I mebbe did kick her once or so, well — I leave it to *you*, judge, hadn't she ought to of been kicked?" The stern official, however, was unable to agree with the culprit; he said that it was a clear case of wanton cruelty and imposed a fine of \$100.


This verdict so staggered John that, after a friend had settled for him, he immediately went out and started on a fresh escapade. Late in the

evening he came to one of his favorite hotels, where his credit was still fairly good. "I'm the best that ever happened!" he shouted, as he whirled around in the lobby, looking for some one to take up his challenge. But nobody did so, and this changed his moderate good humor into definite irritation. For some time he gazed around, looking for some victim on whom to vent his spleen. Suddenly he took a dislike to a young man who was wearing a brown derby. Smashing his fist down on the offending hat, he yelled: "Your hat's out of style!" . But this deed softened his mood, and with the remark, "Don't get mad; there, buy yourself a new hat," he handed the youth a five-dollar bill.

By 1905 he had reached a point where ordinary liquors tasted like milk, and had almost as little effect on him. Nothing but whisky would do now, and several pints of it were necessary before his saturation point was reached.

III

Finally, after a classic debauch, he awoke to the realization of his condition. "I know I don't deserve to be as well as I am" he exclaimed, "but I guess the Lord's keeping me fit as a fiddle for some reason I can't see through."



He was right. An unaccountable but all-seeing providence had doubtless foreordained the course of his life so that it should not be spent wholly in vain. He *had* been kept fit for a definite reason: the ex-champion pugilist and the champion drinker was destined to become a champion reformer with a messianic mission — to go around and tell the story of his life as an awful example and a warning to those who were in danger of sin. John had changed in many ways, mostly for the worse, during the last twenty years, but he was soon to make the most complete change of all. He would not merely *stop* drinking — thousands of ordinary men had done that — but he would become a temperance lecturer: one of the chief pillars of the Anti-Saloon League.

It was in 1905, while he was staying at a Terre Haute hotel, “flat broke and feeling rotten”, as he phrased it, that he decided it was high time to mend his ways once and for all. “All I can remember of the week before I quit was that one day I went into some drug store for something. I was boiled from Monday until Saturday. I was pretty near down and out. And I was thinking. That’s the kind of a time when a man will think — when he’s got a head that feels like it weighed a ton, and is busted, and no one seems to care for

him. A heavyweight head is the best temperance lecture in the world, only most folks won't listen to it. Then I says to myself, 'John, you're the champion damn fool of the world; you're the original million dollar rum hound.'" Descending to the bar, he asked for a glass of wine, which he raised as if to drink a health to the onlookers. They stood waiting for the speech he was accustomed to deliver on such occasions — a speech that was habitually given in an ironically penitent voice: "If I ever take another drink I hope to choke, so help me God!" The words were spoken as usual, but this time their tone was entirely serious, and after he had uttered them John poured the wine into a spittoon, adding, as he did so, "I'll live to be a million years an angel before I touch another!" Everybody guffawed — what else could such low brutes have been expected to do? — but John kept his word. The stars in their courses had decreed that the day on which he made this great decision was March 4, 1905 — the day that also witnessed the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt.

At first, of course, John had a very hard time. It was known that he had made plans to give a series of addresses on various topics; but lyceum agents were afraid of employing his services —

they feared that they might become identified with the cause of temperance and thereby lose their jobs. But Sullivan thought that this was very silly of them. "Why, them fellows is overlooking a big bet!" he exclaimed. "They'd ought to read up their Barnum. Remember how P. T. advertized his show as the 'great moral show' and always made a play to get the preachers to attend it? Barnum knowed the game and he knowed that the churchgoing crowd was the crowd that he wasn't getting and needed for his business. He had the other crowd, anyway. Now, I don't say this because it hits me, but if these fellows knowed anything they'd make a play to get just the kind of people talks like mine would get into the theatres — I mean church folks that now stay away so much. The other gang, why, they've got 'em anyway, and *I'd* never drive 'em away — not on your life! Next to my friend T. R., I can reach more of the plain, rough-and-ready people than any other man they can put out. I talk their man's language and the young fellers, the chaps with red blood, will listen to me."

In another way, too, his reform caused him much trouble. Hundreds of the cronies who had unsuccessfully tried to best him in swigging bouts, constantly put powerful temptations in his path-

way; but he always conquered, for right was on his side. "No, I won't join you," he would tell the tempters. "It's nothing but cold water for yours truly after this. I'm going to be a pattern for every boy in the land. Proud mothers can safely tell their sons to follow in John L.'s footsteps. It's going to be a sad day for the Whisky Trust from now on."

Still, it *was* hard — very hard. "I got a stiff neck from turning my head away from saloons," he admitted. "If I entered 'em, I'd say to myself under my breath, 'I'll be damned if I take a drink!' But I had to swear at myself a good deal before I licked the desire." Finally there came the wonderful day when he succeeded in conquering temptation without cursing himself at all; he merely turned the tables and swore at his tempters. A few months after the Terre Haute miracle, a jolly inebriate, who had often accompanied John on his wildest debauches, met him in a hotel lobby, slapped him most familiarly on the back, and proposed a joint bottle of wine. "No more of the happy suds for me" — John's voice was stern — "I've swore off for keeps." "What's a swear-off between friends, John?" urged the enticer. "You cheap chump!" John flashed out, "You're trying to make a liar out of me! Get the hell out of

here, you ——!" And in less than ten seconds the evil counsellor was down and out. "I guess I must of hurt him some," John commented later, "for he had a pained look on his mug when he got up and limped off. I yelled after him that, if he tried to make me rush the can again, I'd throw him out of the top window."

When, after a year's complete abstinence, Sullivan had demonstrated to himself and the world that he had definitely reformed, he began to fulfill the decree of destiny by going around on the lecture platform. At first, to be sure, his addresses were not concerned with any special reform movement; he merely attempted, as hundreds of newspapers sagely repeated, "to give lectures that were both instructive and entertaining." He began his platform career, logically enough, with a rambling, reminiscent speech entitled "Half Hours with Pugilists", in which flamboyant stereopticon views played an overwhelming part. This was followed by another hodgepodge of autobiography, called "This Merry Old World", which was so deficient in merriment that he was soon talking to empty houses. It thus became clear that something of a different sort was necessary, and John went into temporary retirement to meditate on the choice of a new selection.

A happy inspiration soon came to him, and within a short time crowded houses were raptly listening to "Boston and Its Historic Spots." Lantern slides showed the spots while John told the history. A part of this masterpiece, which described the Back Bay region in detail, ran thus: "That, ladies and gents, is the Back Bay fins. They're the fins the codfish aristocracy keep in the swim with, I suppose. There's an Egyptian villa in the dump, to give the place a Dago atmosphere. Back Bay is a place where folks live in Florida all winter and at the beach all summer. It's a kind of heaven to them that belongs there; one night Saint Peter himself was found there, setting on the stoop of the Somerset Club with a notebook in his hand. When a cop asked him what the big idea was, he said, 'Let me alone. I'm gathering information for improvements in the next world.'"

After some months of successful repetition, "Boston and Its Historic Spots" was laid on the shelf, to be followed by a worthy successor entitled, "How to Win." Sullivan always maintained that, through the instrumentality of this address, he was the first national figure to admonish boys not to be mollicoddles — in fact, he repeatedly affirmed that he was "quite a pace ahead of

Teddy himself in busting the mollycoddle bunk." In this oration, John passed definitely from mere entertainment to highly beneficial, if somewhat disjointed, instruction along lines of physical and mental development. "Get your food cooked right, chew it up fine before downing it, and take plenty of exercise. Don't worry. When a bunch of worry is handed to me, I give it the laugh and that's the finish. So to-day I'm spry and full of jokes. If you want to be like me, learn to hold on. The man who gets up and cries baby because he gets a throw-down or a slap in the jaw is never going to have the fire department putting out rivers he's set afire. Look at George Washington, a fighter who had everything framed up to beat him. According to the warfare dope, George didn't have a look-in against the British. But he held on. If it had been easy for George, we wouldn't think half so much of his winning the championship of England and America as we do. Some people just naturally die on their own hands — no effort made to sidestep the coming punch, no gameness, no ginger shown. They just lay down and drop out of the race, like an old spavined horse. The four-flusher puts up such a poor imitation of a scrap that it smells to the clouds. Dog it and you'll take the count. Mark what I'm going

to shout to you: BE GAME AND THEY'LL NEVER GET YOU!"

Occasionally he would depart from his more or less prepared address, in order to comment on various matters of contemporary interest. His tender sensibilities had of late been deeply shocked by one particularly flagrant sin: the presence of apparently respectable women at prize fights — a violation of ring proprieties that had rarely been countenanced in the good old days of his prime. "I don't think any right-minded woman wants to attend a prize fight," he burst out one day. "I wouldn't want *my* wife to see a fight. Why? Well, I don't exactly know why, but I'm mighty well sure I wouldn't want her there, and it goes against my grain to see other women there. I'll be dumb if I know just why I don't. I guess it's because I, like most other good men, like to see a woman behave like a woman and fill her right place in the world. They had ought to marry and have lots of children — though of course that's with the Lord."

At another time, when the muck-raking campaign was at its height, he took occasion to give his views on the subject at the close of his formal speech. "This talk of tainted money is all rot. In all my years of wild spending, I never heard of

nobody refusing to take the money of John L. Of all the money I give for churches, schools, and other charities, I can't remember a single cent being flopped back to me because it was earned by biffing some unlucky chap on the jaw. There's no such thing as tainted money, and I've handled about every kind there is. The preachers hadn't ought to object to it. They'd ought to be on the level in their profession, just like us prize fighters always is. If any of you here has got what you think is tainted cash in your pockets, just drop it in my hat before you pass out. I thank you one and all very kindly, yours truly, John L. Sullivan."

National holidays gave him a particularly good opportunity to make impromptu stump speeches. Once, on July the Fourth, he became excessively patriotic, even for him. "This is the only real country on the earth!" he began. "China is bigger, but that don't matter. It takes all the good in one hundred Chinamen to make one bad American; and besides, they don't know what to eat. The other nations don't count. Most of 'em can speak foreign languages, but they can't fight. So we have a right to be proud to-day. It's the duty of everybody to shoot off some firecrackers to-day. My advice to Americans, young and old, is to be patriotic all the time. Yell for your coun-

try and think of George Washington every time a firecracker goes off. Tell every foreigner that America can lick his country, whatever it is."

But by far the greatest number of his casual remarks consisted of vehement defenses of the manly sports. The continual agitation against pugilism irritated him most of all, particularly when it took the form of public protests against instruction in boxing at Annapolis and West Point. "What in blazes is the men in the warships and the army for, if they ain't to know something about how to handle themselves when they stack up against some foreign bunch that's making a play to haul down the American flag?" he once challenged. "The more bouts they have the better shooting eyes they'll have when it comes to a showdown with anybody who goes pulling Uncle Sam's whiskers. It 'ud be a fine piece of business if our fighting men was afraid of a slap in the mug or a poke in the wind." Again, he would rise to launch an attack against reformers who were trying to abolish Sunday baseball. "Baseball ain't allowed in the East on Sundays because a lot of cork legs who never has any fun, and is bound nobody else will ever have none, is in control. In the West, where there's just as many Christians, if not more, than there is in the East, baseball is

allowed seven days a week. It don't hurt the Westerners, nor break up no happy homes, nor put the churches out of the running."

After several years of fairly constant platform activities, Sullivan once more found himself out of a job. He was much puzzled for a time, when he attempted to discover why his audiences were falling off. But he finally attained peace of mind when it occurred to him that his orations had been on too high an intellectual plane for the mass of his hearers; and, in an intimate conversation, he concretely summarized the reasons for his failure to hold the crowds. "The line of talk I passed out from the platform was too high up for the sports who fell asleep, and too low down for a few high hats who passed out early. I once come pretty near livening up the show by cleaning out a part of the audience in one bum town. I was showing pictures of some of the greatest sights in our great country, but the idiots thought I was just trying to be funny. When I showed the Statue of Liberty, one fellow yipped out, 'Oh, you flirt!' Then I turned on a view of Niagara Falls, and the same guy sung out, 'There's all the water John L. didn't drink!' I thought it was about time for a show-down, so I called for the lights to be turned on. Then, hopping down off the stage, I got the chap

who I was sure was the monkey man of the party, and lugged him by the collar upon the platform. 'Now, go ahead and be funny,' says I, 'but do it within arm's reach.' He shut up and shook like a mouse in a trap, and I hung on to him while I spoke the rest of my little piece."

But, even though this explanation was satisfactory, John was still out of a job — why, after such a successful beginning, had he failed? He began to reflect even harder, until, in a flash of inspiration, he saw the light. He had failed — nay, more, he had *deserved* to fail — because he had allowed himself to become a mere entertainer instead of a reformer. Yes, that must be it. The scales had dropped from his eyes, and he now understood what duty demanded. So, after a brief period of rest, he entered the employ of the Anti-Saloon League, and once more sallied forth, to wage platform battles against his own arch-enemy. In the treble character of a reformed pugilist, a reformed drunkard, and a muscular Christian — an irresistible combination — he traversed the nation from shore to shore, recounting the gaudy sins of his youth as a warning to the younger generation.

The burden of his addresses was this: "I was a boozier for twenty-five years, and John Barley-

corn it was who knocked me out as a fighter. The only way you can beat old John is to climb out of the ring." His peculiarly personal rendition of "Ten Nights in a Barroom" brought forth sobs of sympathetic anguish from tens of thousands; his somewhat inaccurate array of lurid facts and bristling statistics that showed the horrible strength of the hydra-headed monster, alcohol, drew resounding cheers from the same multitudes; but it was his story — his *own* story — that roused the greatest enthusiasm. That story, variously called "From Fistic Supremacy to Alcoholic Degeneracy", and "How John Lawrence Sullivan Knocked Out John Barleycorn in One Glorious Round", became the chief topic of conversation among temperance circles. However, it was believed that neither of these captions sufficiently emphasized his complete conversion; so another title was invented which tersely summarized both his fall and his rise: "From Glory, to Gutter, to God." Everybody rejoiced in his pat illustrations, his homely infelicities, his ingeniously ungrammatical diatribes, and even in his frequent lapses from recognized good taste — he was just a great big diamond in the rough, and besides, he was *so* easy to understand! Ladies Aid societies, local Literary clubs, organized drives for money in various churches, and many

less notorious organizations, strained every nerve to persuade John to tell them his harrowing tale. And John himself was rejoiced beyond words: his lost youth had returned; the sweet howls of the mob once more filled his capacious ears; he was still the champion of champions.

Thus cheered and lauded to the skies, he waxed ever more valiant in his crusade. "The only way to get a crowd on the water wagon so they'll take a long ride, like I'm taking," he would shout, "is by showing them how much easier it is to get along without the dark brown taste and the morning-after head. Dozens of my friends tried to hoist me upon the front seat by force, but I always fought it. Not till I had a rep that would scare the scare-crows did I beat it for the water wagon. I've thrown three men downstairs and smashed the hats of fifteen others who tried to get me to get off, and the next one that tries it'll get a swim in his own suds."

He was especially zealous in warning boys to be good, and would often speak pointedly to them. "Now, you youngsters, listen to this," he would say. "That rum ain't wrecked my constitution is due to the strength of my constitution, and ain't any argument in favor of drinking." Then, thrusting out an accusing finger at some lad whose swallow

complexion made him a likely looking victim, John would say, "You chop out them cigarettes and keep away from booze. If any of the other kids ask why you quit, tell 'em John L. told you to."

When he dealt with alcohol's most recent and most disgusting triumph — tippling ladies — John often allowed himself to shed solemn tears. "I've had a lot to say, especially to young men, about cutting out all kinds of booze, but something had ought to be passed along to the women who drink. I've seen New York women come out of fashionable cafés hardly able to navigate to their autos, and in the West I've seen respectable-looking women do the same. Thank God" — and a devout finger shot aloft — "Boston's fairest ain't hitting it up that way yet so much as the rest of the nation is. It's a fright, that's what it is, and, as much of a rounder as I've been in my time, I can't see these sights without getting all broke up" — and then John and his audience would break completely down. His vast bulk, his gray hair and moustache, his huge, round, expressionless face, his expansive wing collar and black flowing tie, his conventional black suit, and — most impressive of all — his enormously protruding paunch: all these combined to make his look marvelously respectable

and commonplace. He might have been a bishop, a senator, or even a president.

Occasionally, he would discuss other matters besides temperance. He would refer with complete disgust to the "tango, rag-chewing pugilists" of the time; and during the early years of the war, he would remark, "Colonel Roosevelt is the only man in America the Kaiser is afraid of." He was very sorry, he affirmed, that he was unable to go overseas "to help the Kaiser get whipped good and plenty and for all time." But he often spoke for the cause of Liberty Loan drives, and once, while advising his hearers to save their pennies and buy War Savings Stamps, he explained why it was that he did not try to enlist. "I'm willing to leave that sort of bunk to Jess Willard and William J. Bryan," he expounded. "It don't fool nobody, this telegraphing to the President, and it ain't quite my idea of the right thing, this trying to get into the limelight by kidding the President. I'm too old to fight and I know it. But I can do my bit, and I'll help the President by urging young men to enlist. Now that we're in it, we must hit early and hit hard. Carry the fight to them — that's *my* idea."

Yet the cause of temperance remained his forte. Sometimes he would illustrate his arguments by

reading letters he had received by the hundred from drunkards. One characteristic specimen, which he often used, ran thus :

“The first time I met you was in the Jamestown, New York, Opera House about twenty years ago. I was then a young blood, with about \$50,000 behind me. I won money on nearly all your fights and won considerable, dropping only a hundred on your go with Corbett. It’s the old story, whisky got the best of me. My friends left me when my money was gone, and last December, after hoboing from Boston, I finally reached this place, the —— county house, a wreck. I’ve been three months without booze and am done with it. I ain’t as husky as I used to be, but I think I can win out if I have a little change to keep me while I’m looking for a job. This is straight business, John L., and I know you never hesitate to help a poor devil if he deserves it. If you should use the enclosed envelope, you would have to stamp it, as my last copper goes to mail this to you.”

John would then comment thus on the document: “Here’s enough material to pad out a dozen temperance sermons, and the parsons are welcome to use it. I’ve got a barrel of the same kind of hard luck stuff, with booze at the bottom of it.”

Only twice did he experience any trouble in his labors for righteousness. One evening, while he sat in a box at a burlesque show — for, alas! John still retained some of the vices of his early days — one of the comedians tried to poke fun at him because of his Anti-Saloon League activities. Pointing a finger directly at Sullivan, the actor shouted, "There's John L. Sullivan, retired champion and Anti-Saloon whooper-up, who's still suffering from the effects of a severe operation which cut out his booze." John rose at once and tossed this conundrum to his tormentor, "What's the difference between a bad actor and a fish?" The comedian, taken aback by Sullivan's unexpected challenge, shook his head in negative dismay. "Well," chuckled John, "there ain't any difference, not if the actor's in vaudeville and the fish is a lobster."

His second encounter was far more serious. General Nelson A. Miles refused to address a temperance convention at Atlantic City when he heard that Sullivan was to be one of the speakers. For an instant the unrepentant John L. of old lived again, and burst out with this inflammatory utterance: "The only difference between Miles and me — except that he was a ribbon clerk and I was a plumber once — is that I've read the Decla-

ration of Independence, which it seems he ain't. There's four words that stick out all over that famous document: all men are equal." He continued his attack by sending the chairman of the convention a telegram in which he called Miles "an arrogant, prejudiced, self-centered, strutting old peacock." The final lines of the message read thus: "I have never been jealous of any fighter. Why should Miles be jealous of me? Yours for temperance, John L. Sullivan."

CHAPTER SEVEN: FRIENDS, FOES, AND WIVES

I

MILES was an exception. Throughout all his long life, John had numbered the world's greatest among his friends. Years before, in 1887, he had called on President Cleveland at the White House. While waiting in the East Room, he chanced to see a life-sized picture of Martha Washington. He inquired who she was and commented to the effect that "she was a daisy, but there are lots of better-looking girls in Boston." Upon being introduced, he shook Cleveland's hand so hard that he winced; observing this, Sullivan said, "You're a little soft and need half a dozen Turkish baths to put you in condition." The President then doubled up his arm and asked the guest to feel his biceps; and John, after doing so, commented, "I'm afraid you'd hardly last four rounds. You'd ought to have a little go with me every morning for a month or so. That 'ud put you in condition to handle them


political guys that travel up here every day to bother you."

Nor was John at all bashful or ill at ease in the presence of royalty. He first met the Prince of Wales, by official request, in London during December, 1887; and the Prince, bored by long years of court rigidities, greeted Sullivan with most enthusiastic informality. "I shook his flapper and wished him well," was John's epitome of this meeting. "He struck me as a sport of the right sort, and we chinned each other for two hours." Eye witnesses of this great affair, however, fortunately gave a more detailed account of the conversation. "I'm proud to meet you," was John's opening remark. "If you ever come to Boston be sure to look me up; I'll see that you're treated right." When His Highness had expressed his deep gratitude for this hospitable offer, the talk turned naturally to boxing. Sullivan asked the Prince whether he "put up his dukes much nowadays." "No, I don't spar at all now," replied the royal host, "but my second son, George, the middy, is a regular slugger."

After much chitchat of this sort, a ring was improvised and Sullivan boxed a few friendly but vigorous rounds with a British fighter hitherto unknown to fame. "Of course, officially, I disap-

prove of prize fights entirely," the Prince remarked, as he loudly applauded the two opponents. When the match was over, he asked Sullivan to accept a "little token of his affection." This was a most unusual request, for all ordinary boxers were paid a stipulated price if they pleased the royal spectator; but Sullivan had approached him as an equal — nay, as a benefactor. The Prince therefore made his request very humbly; for the book of court etiquette contained no instructions concerning the proper behavior for such occasions, and he was not at all certain that his guest might not be deeply offended. But John, after making some show of reluctance, and even of vexation, finally decided, as he later explained, to accept the gift "rather than hurt the Prince's feelings." As the scion of royalty departed, Sullivan commented, "Any one can see he's a gentleman," and then added as an after-thought, "I'm a friend of his." He was also reported to have said that the Prince was "the kind of man you'd like to introduce to your family."

When the news leaked out that the future King had established a new precedent in a country that prided itself upon following precedent, it was felt that the Poet Laureate should employ his divine gift in order to sing the praise of this extraordinary



meeting. But he was busy with more somber pre-occupations, and an unknown bard accordingly rose to the occasion with these lines :

Perchance some day the Prince will King
Become, when value much
Enhanced to that same hand shall cling
Which Sullivan did touch.
The loyal throngs, as on they pass,
Shall step with more élan
To kiss the hand which got the squeeze
Of John L. Sullivan.

Queen Victoria, however, did not see fit to honor Sullivan as she had already honored his illustrious countryman, P. T. Barnum. Perhaps her experience with the showman had taught her caution ; at any rate, though John affirmed that he saw her several times, peeking at him from a window at Windsor, and that he waved a friendly hand toward her, she did not return the greeting but merely "made comments which I did not hear." This treatment galled John a little, but he consoled himself by reflecting that Prince Edward "considering all he's had to fight against in the way of family, is a good, all-round man." And, after the Prince had become King, Sullivan still regarded him in a most friendly light, even when the Irish question became very acute. Indeed, he actually

defended the King against the charge of maltreating the Irish. "My present opinion of the King," he remarked in 1908, "is that, if he had his way, he'd give Ireland freedom, for he's a pretty good chap. But he has to keep his job by doing what he's told. If he tried to get gay with things, he wouldn't last as long in the King business as a ham sandwich at a Jew picnic. No, I don't know his son George. He ain't done much yet and I don't care about meeting folks that ain't made some show in the world. Let him go get a reputation, and then I might let him have a chat with me some day, if I ain't too busy. They tell me he's a likely young man, but not so much of a sport as his Pa was."

On another occasion, when Sullivan was traveling around England with a theatrical company, he went with a newspaper man to the royal palace. The attendant, who instantly recognized him, smiled most affably and asked him to come in and see the King, but refused to allow the reporter to enter. John immediately flew into a towering passion. "What's that you said?" he thundered. "If my friend can't come in, I shan't go in neither, and you can beat it to Eddie and tell him so!" Barely ten minutes later, both John and the reporter were chatting gaily with the King.

When Sullivan had returned to America, after hobnobbing with the Prince in 1887, Roscoe Conkling gave him a dinner in honor of his European conquests. The famous Senator, overflowing with good humor, and a classical vocabulary, thus rendered homage to the star of the evening: "Our guest has subdued the haughtiest Kings and champions of two continents; carrying unsullied our beloved banner, the star-spangled, triumphant through every conflict. . . . Unspoiled by his glittering glory, scattering with impartial hand the spoils he has won from the conquered, he returns to us, modestly accepting us plain citizens as equals and friends." Sullivan was struck dumb — overwhelmed by Conkling's oratorical flood. Next day, after he had recovered from his paralyzed astonishment, he said, "Wouldn't that shake you? I'd a missed most of it, if a gent present hadn't wrote it down in shorthand so's I could read it afterward." In John's autobiography there appears this praise of the Senator: "In regard to Mr. Conkling, I am proud to say that he was a warm and constant adherent of mine, attending every exhibition that he could where I appeared, and always dropping in to have a chat when he came near my headquarters in New York."

While an actor, Sullivan of course met many

stage notables. In 1891 he first met Lillian Russell at a Chicago theatre, in which they were both appearing on a variety bill; and, as a gifted reporter wrote, their introduction was "like a meeting of the gods on high Olympus." As they approached, each gazed in rapt admiration at the other. For the first time in his life, John felt ill at ease; for the first — and last — time in her life, Lillian was confused. "I threw up the sponge," John admitted next day. "I couldn't knock *her* out in four rounds." Sullivan awkwardly removed his silk hat and stood nervously twirling it, waiting for Lillian to make the first advance; and Lillian, no longer blushing, coyly sidled up and said, "Let me grasp the hand of the great John L., won't you? Please do; that's a good boy" — and John did. Then, slyly reminding him that it was Saint Patrick's Day, she inquired why he wore no green ribbon. It was too true; he had utterly forgotten it and was filled with dismay — what might not happen to him when he left the theatre? After stuttering out his thanks for her kindness in pointing out his awful plight, he managed to say, "Oh, what'll I do? They'd murder me over in the Nineteenth Ward if I showed up without a sprig of green in my buttonhole." Then Lillian, who understood that he was appealing for aid, at once

became a good Samaritan. "I'll put this piece of green in your lapel," she reassured him. "Stand straight; I won't hurt you; so; don't get frightened; you're too big to cry. *There* we are! Now, Mr. John L., you wear my colors when you go in and fight." And Sullivan himself is authority for the fact that he did wear her colors for some time after meeting her.

What was perhaps John's most curious conversation with a celebrity took place in Buffalo around 1894. A page came to his hotel door one morning, and informed him that a stranger downstairs insisted he was coming up to see the ex-champion on most urgent business. "If you don't say for him to come up, he'll come up anyway," the page assured Sullivan. "You tell the fresh guy he can take a chance of going down faster than he come up!" John shot back. Shortly afterward a man entered, "wearing a suit of clothes that made a noise like a minister," and a verbal combat, which Sullivan himself took pains to record, at once began.

"My name's Sankey," says he.

"Well, I wouldn't feel bad about it," says I.

"I want you to change your way of living and make an example to the youth of the nation."

"You don't want much," says I, eyeing him with not too much friendliness.

“‘You have no right to squander your strength on wild living.’

“‘I don’t squander anything but my money, and I do a lot more good with it than you do with yours, I’ll bet you!’

“‘I’ve given away as much money as you have, but none of it ever went for rum.’

“‘If you knew what a thirst was, mebbe you’d spend some of it that way.’”

They continued to clash for some minutes in this manner. But John, who in those days had the utmost respect for anybody who dared to face him “alone with bare knuckles in a small room,” found himself growing more and more mollified. At the end, he heartily shook hands with Moody’s valiant singer, and they parted as good friends.

Sankey, however, was a Protestant, and Sullivan naturally preferred to choose his religious friends from the most eminent representatives of his own faith. In fact, he had been fortunate enough to win the approbation of His Holiness, the Pope. On one of his European trips, he had been granted an audience with Pope Leo. During the rest of his life, John never tired of telling his friends, over and over again, what had happened at this marvelous encounter. “The dear old man! He didn’t do any preaching at me because of my

business. He seemed very glad to see me; he's a kindly soul who understands that all of us can't be perfect like him."

In 1907, Sullivan called on Cardinal Gibbons at Baltimore. "I'm glad to meet you," said the Cardinal. "You're a gentleman I've heard a lot about." Then, moved beyond his wont, he exclaimed in a tone of admiring awe, "What broad shoulders you have!" John then asked His Reverence what he thought about the art of prize fighting, and was highly pleased to receive the welcome information that "the art of self-defense is a very manly and healthful exercise." On parting, both men exchanged mutual compliments. "Well, good-by, and God bless you," smiled the Cardinal. "Same to you," replied John.

But, above all other friendships, Sullivan preferred his presidential acquaintances. By 1912, he was able to say, with pardonable egotism, "I've shook hands with every President since Garfield was on the job. No President I ever saw had anything on me, and I didn't let any of 'em throw any harpoons into me. We met as American citizens, and they couldn't show me that they ever done anything more for the country than I had done."

More than any of the others, he admired his

beau ideal, Roosevelt. "He's the greatest President that ever flopped himself into the White House chair," John frequently asseverated. He was ready at any time to defend the Rough Rider against the assaults of his enemies. Once, while riding on a train, Sullivan happened to hear a man making some extremely uncomplimentary remarks about his hero. He quickly went up to the fellow and said, in his most menacing tone, "You look like a respectable geeser, but I'll bet you're a crook of some kind!" Then, as John afterward narrated, the low tale-bearer "passed some high-sign oratory that didn't please me a little bit, and I got at him with some man's language till he ducked off the train."

Sullivan never forgave Taft for his break with Roosevelt. Toward the end of Taft's administration, John was immensely pleased because the President was so evidently going to his political ruin. "Taft was going on good as long as he obeyed the rules handed him by the champion who held the Presidential belt before him," chuckled John, "but when he started out on his own hook he begun to get in wrong. It looks as if he was running into a knock-out." At this time, Sullivan's personal resemblance to Taft impressed some of his friends as so striking that they often com-

plimented him; but he was utterly disgusted at the comparison. When an acquaintance slapped him on the back and vociferated, "John, how much you look like Taft!" he would growl in reply, "Look like Taft! Hell, you mean Taft looks like me!"

His dislike of Taft dated back to the time when the President had been Roosevelt's Secretary of War. One day, when John called to ask a favor for a friend, Taft had summarily denied his request; but John, though temporarily taken aback, was not to be outwitted by a mere Cabinet official. "I took the count from Taft, and a lot of people told me it was no use trying to see Teddy about it. 'Chop it!' says I, and jumping over Lodge and some more who thought they was go-betweens, I soon saw him. We talked matters over like old college chums, for he's a Harvard man, and I've instructed a lot of Harvard men how to take care of themselves. We fixed up what the wise ones told me couldn't be fixed up. 'I'll do it for you, John,' said the President, and right off the reel the red tape begun to snap."

In fact, Sullivan went constantly to Roosevelt with all sorts of requests, and was always sure of a delightfully informal reception. Roosevelt once greeted him with the remark, "You're the greatest

fighter that ever stepped into the ring"; and John countered with the equally happy compliment, "You're the greatest President since Lincoln." Once he urged Roosevelt to "lift the lid" on boxing with this appropriate speech: "We don't want to become a nation of dubs, and that's what we're going to be if it's a crime to be handy with our hands. Carrie Nation had her faults, but she could do battle — and that's worth more than paperweight orators who forget that fighting made this bully nation what it is." And Roosevelt could only reply, "Bully!" and promise to do everything he could to further the cause of boxing.

Once John came with a particularly urgent message; he told the White House staff "it was personal." "I saw him at once," said Roosevelt afterward. Putting one of his favorite black cigars on the President's desk, he said, "Have a cigar, Mr. President." When Roosevelt told him that he didn't smoke, Sullivan laid down a second cigar with the remark, "Have another, and give 'em to a friend," and then stated the object of his call. He had come to plead the cause of a boy who had been discharged from the navy. "What sort of a chap is he?" asked Roosevelt. "Mr. President," John replied, laying a huge hairy paw on

Roosevelt's knee, "the boy's all right except he's got a few low tastes. He's fond of music and them things." Roosevelt himself was very proud of his friendship with Sullivan. "He has been my friend for many years, and I am proud to be his," he once told John J. Leary, Jr. "Old John has many excellent qualities, including a high degree of self-respect . . . he never threw a fight . . . he has been the most effective temperance lecturer I have known of. . . . After all, there is a lot of the primal man in most of us."

II

The first Mrs. John L. Sullivan would doubtless have fully agreed with Roosevelt's closing remark. In 1883, John had married a Protestant chorus girl named Annie Bates — a union which, as he himself admitted, was "strenuous in every way while it lasted." As a matter of fact, it lasted only a short time; for Annie soon appreciated to the uttermost her husband's dictum on matrimony: "It's a scrap for life, London Rules, no rounds without a knockdown, and a fight to a finish." Another comment of his seems to indicate that he had tried to curtail her various social activities. "Women don't want to see too much

of the world. There's too much bad stuff going on in it." Annie, however, decided that domesticity was even worse; and so, since she had a roving nature, she took abrupt leave of her husband, who was accordingly driven to solace himself in other ways.

After many years of dubious bachelorhood, and after encroaching old age had limited the scope of his activities, he decided to please the members of the Anti-Saloon League by making a touchingly romantic marriage with a youthful sweetheart, Kate Harkins of Roxbury. But he had never been divorced. Therefore, in 1908, he brought suit against his first wife on the grounds of desertion. Both of the contestants, with equal justice, charged each other with infidelity. John argued his case with an even more fervid oratorical display than was usual for him. "When a man ain't lived with a woman for twenty-five years," he told the judge, "he don't want to call her his wife. I don't want that woman to have my bones. She may outlive me, but if I die first I want a Catholic burial by blood relatives. I've always fought shy of divorce courts on account of my religion, but there's a time when the torture's too strong. I was young and foolish, and didn't use judgment in my choice." Completely persuaded by the force of

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these arguments, the judge at once made out papers in John's favor, and so he was free to fulfill his cherished desire.

On the evening of the wedding, a host of friends came to serenade the happy lovers, and before the guests departed John favored them with a speech. "A man can get along without money and still be O. K., but without some one to love him no man can be happy — I *know*." (Cheers.) "Living in hotels like I've done is all right, but a little home and a woman's smile for John L. from now on. They say I'm a rough and ready chap, but I've got another side. I'm gentle as a kitten in the presence of women, God bless 'em!" (A voice: "Oh, you kitten!") "In conclusion, let me tell you I've saved enough money for a nest egg — but not for myself — just to make my little wife happy; and so, yours truly, always on the level, John L. Sullivan." Thus, blessed with a union that satisfied all his deeper longings, John settled down to enjoy a peaceful and ripe old age.

CHAPTER EIGHT: OLD AGE

I

FOR old age did come and it came early, even to that phenomenal frame. Still it came slowly. Those mighty muscles, gnarled and knotted together, that had once rippled over his whole body, lost their iron strength very, very gradually. Little by little, however, tissues of fat crept in and occupied the places where fibers of steel had been; slowly but inexorably, the fat spread and swelled, until John might almost have been mistaken for an enormous, bottle-shaped candle. During the first years of his temperance lectures, he weighed close to three hundred pounds, but very few of his acquaintances dared to speak to him about his toad-like shape. One of them, who was skilled in classic lore, once suggested to John that he must have died and been reincarnated in the shape of a gigantic boar; and the "boar" at once became transformed into a whirling cyclone that almost annihilated its tormentor.

Indeed, John considered any reference to his much altered shape to be a grave insult. He was infuriated when, in 1912, he received a letter which conveyed the news that he had been elected an honorary member of the New England Fat Men's Club. For some time he seriously meditated the advisability of taking legal action against the Club; but some of his friends, who were much worried lest he should do so, fortunately conceived the brilliant idea of mollifying him by bringing the news that Harvard had serious intentions of honoring his humanitarian endeavors by conferring upon him the degree of LL. D. After John finally discovered that he had been harmlessly deluded, he had forgotten the Club's insult. But just at this time, when peace had apparently been restored, another invitation came — this time from New York City — to join a metropolitan Fat Men's Club. The message closed by assuring John that, if he cared to accept the honor, he might be the Club's president. More enraged than ever, he at once waddled forth on the warpath. "I went looking for the duck that sent me the invitation, and it was lucky for him that I didn't find him," said John. "I ain't no fat man. I've took in nine holes in my belt lately and feel like a featherweight. Speaker Reed once told me to

remember that no gentleman weighed more than two hundred pounds, and he was a gentleman, no matter what the scales said to the contrary, and if anybody says I ain't no gentleman, I stand ready to give him a fist full of arguments that'll show him. A thin English guy said lately that Taft is too fat to be President, which I consider bad manners. There's too many second-hand jokes fired at fat men by slim Jims that look as if they're too tight in the wad to buy themselves a square meal of victuals. If you ask me who ever give these skinny jinks the license to get gay with people who show their keep, I'll say they ain't got any."

Yet these painful experiences eventually had a salutary effect on John, for, after long introspection, he arrived at the wise decision that perhaps he *was* a little overweight, after all. And so, in order to rid himself of his surplus flesh, he began to take regular morning exercises. The first thing he did upon rising was to swing a pair of heavy dumbbells around his head and shoulders for five minutes. He then continued the good work by rubbing a stiff brush through his scanty gray hair about one hundred times — an exercise that was "good for the arms as well as the scalp," as he commented — and when the hundredth stroke had been com-

pleted, he spent the rest of the day in eating unbelievable quantities of food, in smoking, dozing, and refreshing himself in many other ways, in the utmost confidence that his morning exertions would soon restore the trim, sinewy body of thirty years ago. He seems, in fact, to have become an unconscious convert to the most original of Bostonian religions. In 1915, a diplomatic reporter, carefully primed for the interview, visited Sullivan and inquired how he had managed to keep his slim, youthful form and his soft, pink skin. "Ain't I just like a boy?" puffed John. "You'd ought to see me skip the rope and do other stunts every morning. That's how to keep young and spry: plain living and plenty of it, lots of salt water and no worry keeps me looking like the fine fellow I am."

II

"Plain living and plenty of it" — where could this most desirable condition be found, if not on a farm? In 1912, after having listened to Mrs. Sullivan's exhortations for two years, John began to look around for a country estate. Finally, a most desirable place was found at West Abington, Massachusetts; and so the doting pair purchased it and settled down to enjoy what they hoped would

be a perpetual honeymoon. When they were finally established, John was more than pleased with his home. "A gulp from that pure spring down there in the valley tastes better to me to-day than champagne, whisky, or beer ever tasted when I was a rum hound," he joyfully told a neighbor. "I'm back to mother earth for keeps. No more Bohemian life with its high lights and popping bottles. Here I am with a roof to lay my head under, seventy acres of good land, and everything that a man had ought to want."

One thing, however, the farm did not have — a good house. So, before the lovers had gone there, a house had been constructed. Many and long had the arguments been between John and his wife before they had agreed on the style of the dwelling. John had staunchly argued that, since they were both growing older, the only sensible type of building would be a bungalow; but Mrs. Sullivan insisted even more staunchly that she would have a two-story house — or none at all. "Them bungylows is too uppish and new-fangled to suit us old fogies," she insisted, "and then besides, they ain't got room enough — and then besides, I want a real house anyway — and then besides —" "Oh, stop your besidin'!" John roughly broke in. "I don't want none of them

two-story buildings. To hell with this up-and-down-stairs stuff!" Then his wife shed hysterical tears, and chided him for swearing in her presence. "If you do it again," she sobbed, "I'll pack up my duds and go home to my mother — or I would if she was alive, rest her soul!" The tears made John melt, and he yielded to her wishes in complete, though somewhat sullen, dismay. He then walked disconsolately away, apostrophizing himself in subdued tones, while his triumphant spouse was so overjoyed at her conquest that she easily dried her tears and sped to the nearest farm wife, to tell her the whole story. In a short time the house was completed, and John's simple life began.

It was not too simple, however, for some work had to be done; but on the whole he found it very enjoyable. After he had devised a fairly regular routine, he carefully explained its advantages to some people who were thinking of retiring as he had done. "Being a gentleman farmer ain't all play," he warned them. "I'm up early and at my work, and I'm in bed early. Between times I do a lot of work in the little gym I've fixed up in the barn, so that, in one way or another, I keep in pretty good shape. So I'm happy. I'm better off than Rockefeller. He has his country estate — so have I. He has plenty to eat — so have I.

But I can eat anything anybody sets before me and not have to reach for the pepsin bottle after I eat it, nor feel like a thunderstorm was roaring around in my belly, which is more than John D. can do. And when it comes to hair — well, John L.'s got John D. skun a million ways."

But, even though Sullivan had become an ardent devotee of rustic simplicity, he was anxious to work and improve his place. It had run down badly under the slack management of its former owner, and so John went gaily to work in order to build it up. For he was determined to give his community some much-needed lessons in up-to-date methods of agriculture. Thus far he had struggled hard to reach the top in every profession he had entered, and so he had set his heart on becoming a model agriculturist. "I'm a scientific farmer," he explained one day to a group of other farmers who were in sad need of advice. "When I come here, I knew that if I was to get anything worth while from my farm I'd have to feed the soil. So I scattered tons and tons of dung and plowed it under, for you'd ought to know that crops can't grow good if they ain't got anything to grow on. It's too much to expect of 'em. You fellows wouldn't expect to keep good and strong unless you et your meals regular, would you? You'd ought

to be careful to chop the weeds down too, before they get too big; for if a cornfield is all covered with weeds, it's hard for the corn to grow like it ought to. And if you expect your cows to give milk, don't forget to feed 'em regular; they'll do all the better for it. Now, if I ain't give you some plain common sense, I'd like to know what common sense is." His audience, firmly convinced of John's superior wisdom, went scurrying home to follow his instructions.

As the years passed, however, the townfolk became somewhat skeptical of his sincerity. It was noticed that his cows mooed disconsolately as they vainly tried to bite grass where only barren ground met their hungry eyes, that his cornfields regularly produced a thrifty crop of weeds, and that John himself, instead of laboriously demonstrating his excellent agricultural philosophy, spent most of his time sprawling in a huge armchair on his veranda, puffing incessantly at an appallingly malodorous pipe and gazing contentedly at the American flag that flapped patriotically around on a pole in his front yard. And yet, somehow or other, work that was absolutely necessary — the milking of cows and the casual feeding of hogs and chickens — was being done. But *how* it was done, nobody knew. The only certain thing was that

neither John nor his wife did it, and for some time their neighbors wagged completely mystified heads in a fruitless attempt to solve the secret.

At last the truth came out. Old John might be perpetually lazy, but age had sharpened his cleverness; and when various people came from near and far to see the illustrious ex-champion, he had slyly inveigled them — somewhat in the manner of Tom Sawyer — to do his work for him. “See them corn rows?” he would say. “Two weeks ago I hoed ten of ’em in less’n an hour. I’ll bet they ain’t another man living that could do it!” This challenge of course appealed to the sporting instincts of his visitors who, like all good Americans, refused to take a dare. As a result, John lolled back in peace while his twinkling eyes were gratified by the spectacle of a constant stream of dupes who labored at terrific speed, and with invariable success, to demonstrate that they were superior to the great Sullivan.

Sometimes, however, he would unintentionally defeat his own scheme by bawling out, from the deep repose of his sheltered chair, good-natured but ear-splitting instructions concerning the proper way to handle a hoe or swing a scythe. Then his sweating competitor, seized with fear at the gruff howls that reverberated through the whole



FARMER JOHN.

From a photograph in the Library of *The Boston Herald*.

township, would drop his tool and run for life, while John stared aghast. Since nobody ever plucked up enough courage to tell Sullivan what caused these flights, he never understood why it was that many of his visitors vanished before they had finished their self-appointed tasks; and, try as cleverly as he might, John was never quite able to have all his farm work done in the proper fashion.

On those happy occasions when John kept silent, and his willing slaves came marching up, weary but triumphant, to boast of their prowess, he would affect an air of pained surprise and say, "Well, I wouldn't of believed it! Guess I ain't the man I used to be, after all." Then, if he happened to be in a generous mood, he would invite his conquerors in to dinner. At first, Mrs. Sullivan naturally did not approve of this continual stream of hungry guests; but John, as sly in managing her as he was in other ways, would praise her culinary art so extravagantly that the good lady would scurry around, all a-flutter with delight. At all events, he was honestly fond of her bread, and once entertained his guests with a lengthy talk about it. "On the road I've dreamt many a night about having home-made bread like this. I've seen a crowd of strong men swearing at hotel bread out

West, with yours truly leading the chorus. Once I hunted up the head cook in a swell joint where they charged six dollars a day for breathing, and told him for the love of Mike to get busy and bake some bread that wouldn't kill a pig. What he said to me was worse than his bread, so I thumped him on the spot."

The sincerity of John's praise of his wife's cooking — or of anything else, for that matter — could always be accurately gauged by the proportion of oaths which he used; for swearing had become as necessary and as inevitable for him as any other bodily function. When he was angry, the scope of his blasphemous powers was limited; it was when he was in a normal mood — well-fed, smoking and reclining at ease — that his oaths were most mellow, voluminous, and appropriate. Mrs. Sullivan no longer foolishly tried to prevent her husband from indulging in his most cherished avocation; indeed, whenever he failed to maintain his customary standard of efficiency — whenever he spoke one complete sentence that lacked at least one reference to some religious power, whether good or evil — she became much worried, and would anxiously inquire whether he was not feeling well.

III

From 1915 on, in fact, he was not in the best of health. One disease that inevitably appeared was the gout. He tried to alleviate its twinges by wearing shoes that allowed his toes to have the utmost freedom, but all in vain. Deafness, particularly in the left ear, gradually crept upon him; he was very sensitive about it and became grouchy when various people, in the kindness of their hearts, spoke in excessively loud tones, or repeated a question too quickly to please him. "I heard you the first time!" he would snap, as he glared at them. His memory, also, was growing treacherous; and, since he was never methodical enough to keep receipts for bills which he had settled, he often paid the same bill three or four times.

And yet, on the whole, he was very happy. He had aches and pains, to be sure, but still he was more hale and hearty than most men of his age; he had to work a little occasionally, but only a little; he had a home, even though he was not rich; he had no acknowledged children, but he had a wife. Seated comfortably by her side, he spent many happy days driving leisurely around the country roads in an old-fashioned buggy.

Wherever he went, he was universally called "The Big Man." "There comes The Big Man!" whole families would shout in unison when his great form came rolling or riding into view. And when he stayed at home, he could find peace and contentment in doing various things. He liked to peck around in his garden when he wanted some very mild exercise, and he liked even more to tend to the wants of a flock of chickens — it was such fun to see them scramble and flutter for the grain he tossed out to them, and to gather dozens of nice white eggs! It was very diverting, too, to rummage around among the thousands of souvenirs he had collected — among which two pairs of shoes were his special favorites: the ones he wore when he won the championship from Paddy Ryan, and those others which had almost enabled him to catch up with Charlie Mitchell. And then there was his phonograph, with its uproariously funny records, which he loved to play over and over again. He never tired of hearing Uncle Josh recount his marvelous experiences, and he would shake and almost choke with laughter at the hundredth repetition just as vigorously as he had done at the first playing.

The local priest, going the rounds of his parish, rarely failed to spend a good half-hour or more

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death.
the sincer-
plenty of shi-
when we come
crashed emphatically
“we die right.”

But when night came on, John was
of all. He went to bed fairly early, but he
sleep — at first. Propped up on several large
pillows, he would read and reread, with the utmost
relish, the same newspaper that he had already
devoured in the morning. Occasionally his right
hand would stretch out to grasp a big tumbler
filled with orange juice, of which he was inordi-
nately fond. He always wore his glasses in such a
way that the nose-piece lay on the center of his
nose; and when his wife came in to refill the tum-

y
d
and

become a
people came
gs. For were they
truthful braggart had evolved
lessly garrulous old tale-teller whose
utterances on anything and everything
were considered, both by himself and his hearers,
to be the final word. His reminiscences of his
fighting days invariably opened with the phrase,
"When I was champion."

After clearing his throat, and peering over his
glasses to see that his audience was wholly atten-
tive, he would begin. "When I was champion, I
was always ready to fight. My idea of a cham-
pion is one who fights with his fists and not with a

typewriter. Every one knew where to find John L. and every American knew that his heart was true. Thank God, when I lost the championship I didn't lose it to no foreigner. I've had my ups and downs, but the Americans ain't never gone back on me. They knowed I was always honest and sincere. They knowed that when John L. said he'd do a thing that he'd do it. To-day I ain't got a mark on my mug to show that I ever had a fight. And I'm the only one of the ex-champions that has held his own with the crowds. The others dropped out of sight as soon as they lost their titles. Who cares a cuss for Jeffries to-day? Nobody. Who's interested in the big stiff that, God save us, is now world's champion? Nobody. Why, in order to get his name into the papers he has to make some bluff about enlisting; but you couldn't make him enlist if you pulled a gatling gun on him."

Sometimes he would dig out of his vast storehouse of memory some episode that illustrated his prowess in other fields than pugilism. One story that he was fond of relating, with various embellishments on each repetition, concerned his attempt to rescue an hysterical lady from drowning. Once, on a boat in Boston harbor, he had been attracted to her because of her peculiar behavior. "Religion

had went to her brain and she was acting bug-house," and so she logically leaped into the sea. "I made a jump to go after her, but some of my friends grabbed me and pulled me back on deck, by separating the tails from the rest of my coat. She was finally picked up a mile away. Anyhow, she showed that religion is a pretty good thing even when it's crazy, for if she'd been all right in her head, she'd probably have went down before they got to her. She afterward got her brains back, and married and raised a family."

This story gave John his cue: he used it as a starting-point for a laborious dissertation on the twentieth century type of woman.

"Now you look here" — and the index finger shot accusingly at his audience — "don't you laugh at her, for either her religion or her raising a family. The trouble with the modern woman is that she don't do neither, and that's why I'm dead against her. Too much society and too much thinking about what other men think about her. We're going to have race suicide, just like Teddy says, because the ladies nowadays want to keep a stylish figure. It's getting so that, if a man wants a family, he's got to guarantee his wife he'll buy her a plaster of Paris cast so she won't lose her shape. Give me the old-fashioned girl — the one

like I used to know when I was a youngster. I ain't saying anything about her morals, mind you; I mean the way them kind looked at things — at life. But the young men to-day, too, ain't much better. Too much education, booze, and being good fellows. If I had a boy, I'd learn him to box."

John was now well on his way. Stuffing a fat finger into his reeking pipe, he would go on — and on — for he had introduced the two topics which, in one way or another, had occupied most of his time: women and athletics.

"If the young fellows want to make good in this world, they've got to let booze alone. Let women alone, too, till you feel like getting married; work hard at the job you're on, no matter what it is; don't get the fool notion in your noddle that you ought to go to college; keep out of politics; and learn to box. The more I see of athletics and boxers, the more I wonder at the endurance of women. When you size up the way a woman is put together, pinched into corsets, her feet done up like a Chink's, only worse, her heels set upon stilts, the whole rig topped off with a lid brain-storm that's got everything from the remains of fowls to an armful of plunder from a ribbon counter, and think of her getting away with it and staying

in the game so long, she's sure going some. If a man gets exposed to the night air in an open-faced suit, he chases after cough-killers. But any wisp of a woman can put on a make-up that looks as if the dressmaker was shy of cloth when the upper story was built, and beat the doctor at that, even if she can't breathe only once in six times and is all gooseflesh above the seventh rib."

Sometimes a visitor would ask Sullivan a question, vainly hoping that he would admit his inability to answer it. Once this query was put to him: "Say, John, don't you think it's rather funny that ex-President Eliot's letters bring only fifty cents apiece, while yours bring seventy-five cents?"

"Funny nothing!" John retorted. "I don't see nothing funny about that, nor I don't know of no reason why one of my letters shouldn't be worth at least fifty per cent more than his'n. Eliot's all right, but he's wrote too many letters, which I ain't. He's wasted his time in writing, while I've lived like a man. See what I mean? We pay big money for diamonds because everybody ain't got 'em. Eliot's good enough in his way, but his way ain't good enough, that's all. He's another of them educated ginks, and I can tell 'em wherever I see 'em. All I have to do is pick out the watery-eyed, round-shouldered, knock-kneed gents who've

got topheavy because they started out wrong as boys instead of being a man, like I was. They got their domes stuffed to the hair-roots with a lot of has-been ideas. I can't stand 'em; they give me the creeps. A mollycoddle boy growing into a mollycoddle, letter-writing, and such stuff man is something that gets me swearing mad. What's this Eliot ever done for Boston, compared to what the Sullivans has done?"

In this way John managed to swing the discussion around to one of the topics nearest his heart — family pride — and this gave him a fresh start. Settling back more comfortably in his chair, and stuffing his now empty pipe with the strongest cut-plug tobacco, he rambled on.

"They'd ought to be a Sullivan reunion in Boston. I tried to fix one up once in Mechanics Building, but it only holds ten thousand, and so of course it wasn't near big enough. Then I tried to navigate a big ox-roast in Franklin Park, but the police wouldn't allow it — said we'd kill all the tender grass, and like enough eat up all the squirrels too, when the oxes was all et up. It's a shame that it couldn't be done, for Boston's the greatest Sullivan town in the whole world. There's enough Sullivans here to make an army big enough to capture Canada from the British and make it

Irish, like it ought to be. There's enough of us to man the navy and send all John Bull's ships where they belong. Sullivan Square was named after a Sullivan, and there's other places all over the country named after big Sullivans too. Some of the biggest leaders of thought in the country is named Sullivan. All the lines of human endeavor is represented in our illustrious family — it'll be a damned shame if a Sullivan ain't made the next President of Harvard, let alone the United States. There is — Sullivan of the Elks, Dr. — Sullivan who once performed a wonderful operation that saved a man's life just in time to save him from the undertaker. There's — Sullivan the politician, — Sullivan once a big league ballplayer, and — Sullivan who used to be head waiter at the Parker House, but who was fired because he wouldn't shave off his heavy moustache, and many others I might name. If you was to cut the name of Sullivan out of the Boston Telephone Directory, it 'ud look like the Bible would if it didn't say nothing about God."

V

But, while he talked and talked, the end was approaching. That great hulk of flesh, battered and bruised by all sorts of excesses, was still serv-

ing him fairly well; but, after 1915, cirrhosis of the liver appeared and a little later heart trouble began. His wife, too, was failing, though some time passed before it was discovered that she had a cancer; and in 1917 she died. After that, John was utterly disconsolate, although, as administrator of her estate, he gained control of \$4,000 real and \$800 personal property. The empty house frightened him; he therefore persuaded one of his old sparring partners, George Bush, to come and live with him, and for a while he almost regained his old-time jocularly. Only four weeks before his death, he expressed himself in a characteristic way about his eventual decease. "If the good Lord should call me right now, I may say I've seen it all. I know the game of life from A to Z; from soda to hock."

Within a year, his money was all gone, but he tried desperately to conceal the fact that he was in dire financial straits. He was excessively sensitive about this condition, for he had a horror of being classed with the penniless and disreputable boxers. The few intimate friends who knew the facts were forced to resort to all sorts of tricks in order to persuade him to accept any assistance. One of them, carrying two large turkeys, once met him. "Say, John," he said, "one of my neighbors

just give me both these critters, but me and my family can't possibly eat 'em both. I don't like to see 'em wasted; can't you use one?" And John, always ready to do a favor, walked off with one of the birds.

He refused to mortgage his property, for the fact would have become publicly known. Yet he never entirely abandoned hope that fortune would smile on him once more. Stimulated by the hope of great financial successes, he formed the John L. Sullivan Motion Picture Company, which, so he proposed, should make pictures centering around him and his career. He might have made a satisfactory arrangement with some of the prominent producers had he so desired, but he refused to consider doing so. "I don't need no managers now like I did when I didn't have no head about me on account of booze," he staunchly asserted. "If there's money in this thing, and I *know* there is, it's going to be for John L. and a few of his friends." But the grandiose scheme failed completely for lack of money to begin it. So he continued to live from day to day with a sadly depleted larder. After his death, indeed, very little money was found in his house, and only one-half the stock on his farm belonged to him, for the other half — a horse — had been loaned him.

During January, 1918, the heart attacks became more frequent. He was miserable, too, because war-time restrictions prevented him from burning coal; and he was therefore obliged to burn wood. Unfortunately, both he and his partner had such poor memories that they often forgot to keep the fire going. Then John would grumble and wonder what on earth was the matter with the stove; and when it was discovered that the fire was burned out, each culprit would blame the other for letting it die. His own sufferings, however, made him sensitive to the needs of the poor who had nothing at all to burn; and his last public act — on the Thursday before his death — was to offer five hundred cords of his own wood to needy people, provided that they would cut it and haul it away.

No one realized that his death was so near, for, in spite of his weak heart, only a week before he died he climbed six flights of stairs with no apparent ill effect, and on the same day pleased himself immensely by doubling himself up until his fingers almost touched his toes. On the evening of that day, he sat up until midnight, puzzling over a new game of solitaire which he had been trying to learn. Indeed, a banquet had been arranged in his honor: a banquet that was to be given in Boston on February 2.

But, on the morning of February 2, John began to have fainting spells. Bush told him that a doctor ought to be called; but John refused to allow it. "I don't want no doctor," he kept muttering. "I've listened to a lot of 'em in my life, and I know I'm all right and can doctor myself." Then, while Bush was busily applying ice bags to his head, he insisted that he would soon be all right if he could take a bath. Bush, fearful but obedient as he always was, went to prepare it; but before it was ready, John began to grow slowly unconscious. As his mind gradually became a blank, he said over and over, "I'm all right — I'm getting better right along." At midday he died.

The funeral was held at his sister's home in Roxbury. The walls in the death-chamber were covered with pictures of John in an endless variety of civilian and fighting poses; and, as the death-watch was kept, the watchers, talking in low tones, may have retold the innumerable stories of John's prowess, and perhaps cast fearful glances toward the coffin, almost expecting to see the body leap up as in life and twist itself into a posture of menacing offense. Thousands of people came in to weep over the dead hero. Among them was a boy, who eagerly asked, "Say, can I see John L.?" When told that he could, he inquired even more eagerly, "Say, is

he in his fighting togs?" Having learned that the body was not thus dressed, he was terribly disappointed at first — it seemed *so* queer! — but finally went in to satisfy his curiosity.

A requiem high mass was held in one of the Boston churches on February 6. The body, clothed in full dress, lay in a magnificent mahogany coffin which had been shipped from New York, since one large enough could not be found in Boston; the mighty right hand, clasping a string of beads, rested upon the broad bosom. Jake Kilrain, now much crippled by rheumatism, served as usher at the funeral; but Roosevelt and Corbett, the most prominent persons who had been especially invited, were unable to be present. "Requiescat in pace," chanted the priest, and the congregation devoutly responded, "Amen."

Ten strong men then carried the casket to the hearse, and the funeral procession passed slowly through streets lined with weeping spectators to Calvary Cemetery. At the grave the priest made an appropriate reference to the victory of the deceased man over his greatest enemy, alcohol, and then all that was mortal of John L. Sullivan was forever hidden from human view.

BEYOND LIFE

It is barely possible that at high noon, on February 2, 1918, some of the most renowned heroes of antiquity were gathered together in a congenial nook, located — one cannot be too sure in such matters — perhaps in Elysium, in Paradise, in Valhalla, in Hades, or even maybe in Purgatory. For, tiring of the restrictions imposed upon them in the various parts of the Unknown to which they happened to be transported after death, they had wandered to this private spot in order to brag once more about the valiant deeds they had performed in the flesh in the brave days of old. Goliath, Polyphemus, Siegfried, Hercules, Beowulf, Fafnir, — these numbered but a few of the vast throng of mighty giants on hand; while, aloft on a safe perch, Jack the Giant-Killer thumbed his nose most indecorously at the whole gathering. The talk, at first friendly, waxed more and more boisterous and raucous; vainglorious boasting and sarcastic gabbling steadily increased; louder and

